

Recognition and Freedom

Social and Critical Theory

A CRITICAL HORIZONS BOOK SERIES

Editorial Board

John Rundell (*University of Melbourne*)
Danielle Petherbridge (*University College Dublin*)
Jeremy Smith (*Federation University*)
Jean-Philippe Deranty (*Macquarie University*)
Robert Sinnerbrink (*Macquarie University*)

International Advisory Board

William Connolly
Manfred Frank
Leela Gandhi
Agnes Heller
Dick Howard
Martin Jay
Richard Kearney
Paul Patton
Michel Wieviorka

VOLUME 17

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/sct*

Recognition and Freedom

Axel Honneth's Political Thought

Edited by

Odin Lysaker and Jonas Jakobsen



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Recognition and freedom : Axel Honneth's political thought / edited by Jonas Jakobsen and Odin Lysaker.
pages cm. — (Social and critical theory, ISSN 1572-459X)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-28733-4 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-90-04-28734-1 (e-book) 1. Liberty—
Philosophy. 2. Sociology—Philosophy. 3. Honneth, Axel, 1949– 1. Jakobsen, Jonas. II. Lysaker, Odin, 1976–

B2899.L5R43 2015

320.092—dc23

2014038761

ISSN 1572-459X

ISBN 978-90-04-28733-4 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-28734-1 (e-book)

Copyright 2015 by Koninklijke Brill nv, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill nv incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff and Hotei Publishing.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill nv provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Notes on Contributors	viii

Introduction: Recognition and Freedom in Axel Honneth's Political Thought 1

Odin Lysaker and Jonas Jakobsen

- 1 Education and the Democratic Public Sphere: A Neglected Chapter of Political Philosophy 17
Axel Honneth
- 2 Recognition, Education, and Civic Equality: Uncovering the Normative Ideals of the Welfare State 33
Simon Laumann Jørgensen
- 3 Recognition, Solidarity, and the Politics of Esteem: Basic Income as a Test Case 57
Arto Laitinen
- 4 Sociality, Anti-Sociality, and Social Work: Political Imagination in a Social Democratic Welfare State in Decline 79
Heikki Ikäheimo
- 5 Dimensions of Freedom: Axel Honneth's Critique of Liberalism 101
Morten Raffnsøe-Møller
- 6 Surplus of Indeterminacy: A Hegelian Critique of Neoliberalism 124
Arne Johan Vetlesen
- 7 Democratic Disagreement and Embodied Dignity: The Moral Grammar of Political Conflicts 147
Odin Lysaker
- 8 Contextualising Religious Pain: Saba Mahmood, Axel Honneth, and the Danish Cartoons 169
Jonas Jakobsen

- 9 **Inquiries into Identity: The Struggle for Recognition in Erik Allardt's Study of Ethnic Conflicts** 193
 Arvi Särkelä
- 10 **Ultimate Values and Immanent Critique: On Axel Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit* and Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*** 213
 Carl-Göran Heidegren
- 11 **Writing History from a Normative Point of View: The Reconstructive Method in Axel Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit*** 237
 Jørgen Pedersen
- 12 **Freedom, Solidarity, and Democracy: An Interview with Axel Honneth** 260
 Morten Raffnsøe-Møller
- Index** 283

Acknowledgements

We express our gratitude to all the authors for their contributions. We would also like to thank John Rundell and Jean-Philippe Deranty for their confidence and encouragement, and Heikki Ikäheimo for suggestions. Our thanks also to Morten Raffnsøe-Møller for undertaking the interview with Axel Honneth. But most of all, we thank Honneth for his willingness to be interviewed, as well as for his generous suggestion to include one of his latest but yet unpublished texts, in this volume.

Odin Lysaker and Jonas Jakobsen

Notes on Contributors

Carl-Göran Heidegren

(Ph.D. in Sociology and History of Ideas) is Professor in Sociology at the University of Lund in Sweden. His main research interests are recognition theory, classical and modern sociological theory, sociology of time as well as sociology of philosophy. Heidegren has published several books and articles, among which one of the latest is "Recognition: A Theory of the Middle?" (in Danielle Petherbridge (ed.), *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays*, Brill, 2011).

Axel Honneth

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Professor in Social Philosophy and Director of the Institute for Social Research, both at the University of Frankfurt in Germany, as well as Professor in Philosophy at Columbia University in the USA. His areas of specialisation are social and political philosophy, as well as ethics and social theory. Among Honneth's latest publications in English is *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition* (Polity Press, 2012) and *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (Columbia University Press, 2014).

Heikki Ikäheimo

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Senior Lecturer and Australian Research Fellow at the University of New South Wales in Australia. He has written mainly on recognition, personhood, and G.W.F. Hegel. Among Ikäheimo's recent publications is the co-edited collection (with Arto Laitinen) *Recognition and Social Ontology* (Brill, 2011).

Jonas Jakobsen

(M.A. in Philosophy) is Ph.D. Fellow at the University of Tromsø in Norway. Jakobsen's research areas are social and political philosophy, with a particular focus on secularism, multiculturalism, and religion in the public sphere. Among his latest publications is "Education, Recognition, and the Sami People of Norway" (in Heike Niedrig and Christian Ydesen (eds.), *Writing Postcolonial Histories of Intercultural Education*, Peter Lang, 2011).

Arto Laitinen

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Professor of Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Tampere in Finland. His main research areas cover social philosophy, the nature of human agency and personhood, as well as theories

of normativity, ethics and meta-ethics. Together with Ikäheimo, Laitinen has recently edited *Recognition and Social Ontology* (Brill, 2011).

Simon Laumann Jørgensen

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Assistant Professor of Political Theory at the Department of Political Science at Aalborg University in Denmark. His research covers theories of democracy, recognition and integration. Laumann Jørgensen has written and edited several articles and anthologies on education, recognition, and political theory.

Odin Lysaker

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Associate Professor in Ethics at the University of Agder in Norway. His research interests cover ethics, political philosophy, and social philosophy. Lysaker has published on topics such as recognition, human dignity, justice, democracy, and free speech. One of his forthcoming publications is "Humanity in Times of Crisis: Hannah Arendt's Political Existentialism" (in Guttorm Fløistad (ed.), *Philosophy of Justice*, Springer, 2014).

Jørgen Pedersen

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of Bergen in Norway. He has published widely within the fields of social and political philosophy, as well as edited several anthologies. Pedersen's latest publications include "Social Philosophy: A Reconstructive or Deconstructive Discipline?" (in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 2012) and "Justification and Application: The Revival of the Rawls-Habermas Debate" (in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 2012).

Morten Raffnsøe-Møller

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Associate Professor in Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Århus in Denmark. He has published on G.W.F. Hegel, Axel Honneth, and Charles Taylor, as well as modern university management. Among Raffnsøe-Møller's latest publications is "Aims and Formats of Performance Measurement at Danish Universities: Battles over Performance Regimes and Procedures" (in Jens Erik Kristensen, Hanne Nørreklit, and Morten Raffnsøe-Møller (eds.), *University Performance Management*, DJØF Publications, 2011).

Arvi Särkelä

(M.A. in Political Theory) is Ph.D. Fellow at the University of Frankfurt in Germany. He is working on a Ph.D. project about struggles for recognition as a motive in the thought of G.W.F. Hegel and John Dewey. Särkelä's main research interests are social philosophy, meta-ethics, and philosophy of religion. His latest publication is: "Ein Drama in drei Akten: Der Kampf um öffentliche Anerkennung nach Dewey und Hegel" (forthcoming in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*).

Arne Johan Vetlesen

(Ph.D. in Philosophy) is Professor in Philosophy at the University of Oslo in Norway. His main research interests are ethics and social philosophy. Vetlesen has published several books and articles, and some of his latest publications in English are *A Philosophy of Pain* (Reaktion Books, 2010), as well as *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Introduction

Recognition and Freedom in Axel Honneth's Political Thought

Odin Lysaker and Jonas Jakobsen

The chapters of this volume address Axel Honneth's political thought. Some chapters discuss its theoretical foundations, some chapters apply it to actual cases, and some chapters compare it with other theoretical positions. This variety of topics and approaches demonstrates not only the complexity and multi-perspectival nature of Honneth's political thought but also its relevance for anyone who wishes to understand and analyse the most critical challenges of modern societies: social fragmentation and discontent, the marginalisation of minorities, the reification of human relations, exaggerated individualism and egocentrism, unregulated financial speculation, and the erosion of the democratic public sphere.¹

Honneth's political thought shares a normative core with other contributions to contemporary political philosophy, in particular with political liberalism, namely, that justice requires the organisation of society to include each citizen as a free and equal person. Modern political theory must, therefore, begin by acknowledging “the normative idea that all members of modern societies must possess the same capacities and conditions for individual autonomy”.² However, Honneth conceives the possibility of autonomy or freedom in a particularly extensive and demanding manner. For him, the achievement of freedom—be it our personal freedom to form and pursue a conception of the good, or our political freedom to contribute to democratic will-and opinion formation—is always based on experiences and relations of *recognition*. As formulated by Honneth:

* We would like to thank Jørgen Pedersen and Heikki Ikaheimo for comments to an earlier version of this introduction.

- 1 This volume focuses rather narrowly on Honneth's political thought. For an introduction to his comprehensive program for a critical social theory, see for example: Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication: A Critical Study of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill, 2009; Danielle Petherbridge, *The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013.
- 2 Axel Honneth, “The Fabric of Justice: On the Limits of Contemporary Proceduralism”, in *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012/2010, pp. 35–55, p. 46. See also: Axel Honneth, “Redistribution as Recognition: A Response to Nancy Fraser”, in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003, pp. 110–197, pp. 177–178.

[My] conception understands individual autonomy not as a monological but as an *intersubjective* matter. Individuals achieve self-determination by learning, within relations of reciprocal recognition, to view their needs, beliefs and abilities as worthy of articulation and pursuit in the public sphere.³

According to Honneth, a just society is a society in which all recognitive conditions for freedom are met—not only conditions that can be regulated by the state (the parliament, the courts, and the bureaucracy). Consequently, as the contributions to this volume demonstrate, Honneth's political thought encompasses more than the institutional framework of a liberal democratic state, namely, the entire range of intersubjective self-understandings, norms, practices, and institutions, which collectively constitute the social or recognitive infrastructure of freedom: “this model regards the normative idea of democracy not only as a political, but *first and foremost* as a social ideal”.⁴

In this introduction, we employ Honneth's term “political ethics” to denote his normative theory of democracy's social-recognitive infrastructure in its entire scope and depth.⁵ Even though Honneth's political ethics is normative and critical, he claims it is grounded on an analysis of “empirically given interests”, including the “emancipatory” interest of persons who experience “asymmetries and exclusions”.⁶

In the remainder of this introduction, we proceed as follows: First, we provide a brief and highly selective overview of some of the main characteristics of and changes in Honneth's political ethics from the publication *The Struggle for Recognition* (1992) to *Das Recht der Freiheit* (2011). Second, we highlight how he conceives his theory as an alternative to liberalism in the significant tradition that was created by John Rawls. Last, we introduce the chapters of this book by explaining how they highlight the social-ethical ideal in Honneth's political thought.

3 Axel Honneth, “The Fabric of Justice”, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

4 Axel Honneth, “Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today”, in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007/1993, pp. 218–239, p. 236 (our emphasis).

5 Honneth also uses the term ‘social morality’. See: Axel Honneth, “Redistribution as Recognition”, *op. cit.*, pp. 172–175.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

1 **Grounding Recognition and Freedom: From Anthropology to Reconstruction**

One approach to framing Honneth's political ethics is to examine its methodological changes, namely, from a philosophical-anthropological 'identity-formation' to an investigation of historical-reconstructive theory about modern freedom.⁷

1.1 ***Recognitive Anthropology***

The philosophical anthropology of Honneth's political ethics is extensively addressed in the seminal work *The Struggle for Recognition*.⁸ Based on Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Jena Writings* and modern social psychology (Georg Herbert Mead) and developmental psychology (Donald W. Winnicott), Honneth claims that despite individual and cultural differences, *all* human beings seek to realise themselves in three basic ways: as bodily-emotional beings, as rationally and morally accountable persons, and as individuals with particular traits and abilities.⁹

Moreover, Honneth attempts to demonstrate that the successful realisation of these three dimensions of human personality is based on three corresponding forms of recognition, namely, love (in the private spheres of care and personal relations), respect (in the institutional spheres of the state and legal rights), and esteem (achievements in the spheres of work life, market, and civil society). Consequently, we should understand that human self-realisation is *historical* in two interrelated senses: ontogenetically (a process on the level of an individual's life history) and phylogenetically (a socio-historical and institutional process). The three spheres of recognition are not only stages through which we understand and develop ourselves as individuals (ontogenesis) but are also—with regards to respect and esteem—the historical products of social, political, and cultural learning processes and recognition struggles (phylogenesis).¹⁰

7 See also: Odin Lysaker and Jonas Jakobsen, "Social Critique between Anthropology and Reconstruction: An Interview with Axel Honneth", in *Norsk filosofisk tidsskrift* [Norwegian Journal of Philosophy], Vol. 45, No. 3, 2010, pp. 162–174.

8 For Honneth's philosophical anthropology, see also: Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988/1980.

9 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995/1992, p. 129.

10 Cf.: *Ibid.*, p. 176; Axel Honneth, "Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions", in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2002, pp. 499–519, p. 511.

Individual self-realisation, therefore, becomes politically relevant in a minimum of two senses. First, democratic institutions are necessarily based on a citizenry that has been formed or educated, both emotionally and cognitively, in ways that enable it to co-operatively and self-securely participate in the process of democratic will-and opinion formation. Honneth claims that it is only through processes of socialisation and internalisation of norms that we can learn to articulate and pursue our own interests as simultaneously *recognising* and *recognised* in the public sphere. In other words, without the experience of recognition, such as as love, respect, and esteem, we are unlikely to develop the self-understandings, attitudes, and norms that characterise democratically engaged and critical citizens.

Second, individual self-realisation becomes politically relevant in a normative sense by serving as a justification of Honneth's political ethics. Democratic life-forms are justified to the extent that they enable the full and unrestricted self-realization of all subjects. One of the terms Honneth uses to characterise such life-forms is 'post-traditional democratic ethical life':

the universalistic achievements of equality and individualism would be so embedded in patterns of interaction that all subjects would be recognised as both autonomous and individuated, equal and particular persons.¹¹

The term 'post-traditional democratic ethical life' stresses a minimum of three aspects of democracy. First, a democracy is based on a particular way of living as citizens of the same society or political community (i.e., 'life'). Second, this way of life is developed through the previously mentioned processes of socialisation and internalisation of norms, which establishes particular expectations and relations of recognition (i.e., 'ethical'). Last, Honneth's method of framing a democracy also involves a plurality of cultural identities and ethical values (i.e., 'post-traditional').¹²

11 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 175. For this concept, see: Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory on Law and Democracy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996/1992, p. 461; Albrecht Wellmer, "Conditions of a Democratic Culture: Remarks on the Liberal-Communitarian Debate", in *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998/1993, pp. 39–61; Richard Bernstein, "The Retrieval of the Democratic Ethos", in *Cardoso Law Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4/5, 1996, pp. 1127–1146.

12 See also: Axel Honneth, "Post-Traditional Communities: A Conceptual Proposal", in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, pp. 254–262.

Why should we prefer a democratic ethical life to other ways of organising society and understanding social justice, such as traditional or nondemocratic approaches? By trying to mediate between the Aristotelian emphasis on the good life and the Kantian emphasis on equal respect, the initial answer given by Honneth is as follows: Only modern democratic societies promise *all* individuals a chance to realise themselves in all dimensions of their personality, namely, as concretely embodied, universally respected, and particularly esteemed persons. This promise involves the idea of “a network of different relations of recognition [e.g. love, respect, and esteem] in which individuals can know that they are affirmed in a dimension of their self-realisation”.¹³

In particular, only post-traditional democracies have sufficiently separated recognition as respect from recognition as esteem and liberated the struggle for esteem from the framework of a pre-determined substantial value hierarchy. The first differentiation process (the separation of respect and esteem) has secured our equal legal status independent of our particular honour or social status.¹⁴ The second process has liberated the struggle for social esteem from pre-given and metaphysically justified value hierarchies, according to which individuals possess social worth based on their membership of a specific social class. Democratised struggles for esteem are struggles between symmetrically related and individuated persons who struggle for recognition within an open and pluralistic value horizon.¹⁵ Therefore, only post-traditional democracies possess the recognitive resources to offer all citizens a ‘successful life’, which is understood as free and undistorted self-realisation: “The three distinct patterns of recognition (...) represent intersubjective conditions that we must further presuppose, if we are to describe the general structures of a successful life”.¹⁶

However, although Honneth’s normative ideal of democratic ethical life is based on claims to freedom and recognition, which are currently effective in contemporary social reality, it is a *critical* vision and not a mere description of modern society. Thus, Honneth’s political ethics serves as a type of hypothetical ‘end state’ for historical struggles for recognition. This end state articulates the vision of a society in which all individuals are emancipated from experiences of misrecognition and injustice.¹⁷ As the contributions to this volume demonstrate in different ways, this vision can help us to articulate and criticise

13 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 121–130.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

hidden forms of structural exclusion and social suffering in actually existing liberal democracies.

1.2 *Reflexive Cooperation*

In his collection of articles entitled *Disrespect*, Honneth develops and refines his early social-political intuition. Here, he situates his model within the tradition of radical democracy, particularly John Dewey. Honneth emphasises the public engagement of citizens, which surpasses state institutions and period elections. According to this Deweyan line of thought, democratic ethical life should be understood as “the outcome of the experience that all members of society could have if they related to one another cooperatively through a just organization of the division of labor”.¹⁸ Thus, the social ideal of democracy highlights a specific form of ‘reflexive cooperation’ among fellow citizens.

Inspired by Dewey, Honneth proposes what he claims to be a third alternative and middle level between (Arendtian) republicanism and (Habermasian and Rawlsian) proceduralism, respectively. As a contribution to the debate between liberals and communitarians, Honneth argues that his approach is able to combine the liberal focus on the individual with the communitarian emphasises on social communities.¹⁹

1.3 *The Fraser—Honneth Debate*

In their dispute in *Redistribution or Recognition?*, Honneth and Nancy Fraser address one of the major issues of modern political philosophy, namely, the relationship between economic redistribution and intersubjective recognition. Fraser defends a ‘dualistic’ approach and argues that distributive injustices are not reducible to recognitive ones. Honneth, by contrast, defends a ‘monistic’ approach and argues that questions of economic redistribution are best analysed in terms of intersubjective recognition.

Although Fraser shares some basic intuitions with Honneth regarding his outline of critical theory, she criticises his stance for not being able to avoid two forms of reductionism, the first of which she terms ‘culturalism’. Fraser suggests that recognition is a cultural phenomenon rather than an economic phenomenon and that some instances of distributive injustice cannot be properly understood as instances of misrecognition. The ‘white, heterosexual,

¹⁸ Axel Honneth, “Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation”, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

¹⁹ See: David Owen, “Self-Government and ‘Democracy as Reflexive Co-operation’: Reflection on Honneth’s Social and Political Ideal”, in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds.), *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 290–320.

and male worker' may lose his job due to irresponsible financial speculation although he is a recognised and esteemed citizen. She therefore criticises Honneth for assuming that "political economy is reducible to culture" and that "class is reducible to status".²⁰

Honneth, on his side, argues that unjust distribution is produced by inherent patterns of social misrecognition and that Fraser's concept of culture is too narrowly focused on minority cultures and identity politics. Honneth defines the relationship between society and 'culture' "as an internal one".²¹ Therefore, contrary to contemporary debates over multiculturalism, Honneth is not interested in culture as something that separates minority groups from the majority. Rather, Honneth's account of 'culture' is meant to capture the subjects motivational resources *as members* of a particular society. Thus, even if Honneth reduces political justice to a matter of 'culture', this reduction does not provide support for popular forms of multiculturalism and identity politics.

According to Fraser, 'psychologism' is another reductionist tendency in Honneth. Fraser accepts that "misrecognition can have the sort of ethical-psychological effects" Honneth analyses.²² However, she also argues against him that the "wrongness of misrecognition does not depend on the presence of such effects".²³ For example, the denial of equal rights is wrong even if the misrecognised are not psychologically damaged. Therefore, Fraser suggests that Honneth reduces political justice to a matter of psychology, that is: subjective self-realisation and identity-formation.²⁴ Honneth subsequently accepted elements of this criticism. His nonpsychological approach in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, which was published in 2011, can be seen as an attempt to avoid the initial reliance on an excessive theory of self-realisation (see above).

Simultaneously, we argue here that Fraser exaggerates and slightly misunderstands the normative implications of Honneth's reliance on a psychologically informed theory of self-realisation. First, pace Fraser, Honneth does not claim that *all* subjective experiences of psychological distress and misrecognition are normatively relevant; only that certain kinds of misrecognition are so

20 Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation", in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003, pp. 7–109, p. 102, fn. 51.

21 Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication*, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

22 Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics", *op. cit.*, pp. 31–32.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Simon Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, pp. 31–39; Simon Thompson, "Is Redistribution a Form of Recognition? Comments on the Fraser—Honneth Debate", in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2005, pp. 85–102.

harmful for our ability to function well, that they should be relevant for any critical social theory. Therefore, a reduction of issues, such as freedom, justice, and democracy to issues of psychological injury, is not at stake. Conversely, the reason why Honneth bases his political ethics on a psychologically informed theory of self-realisation is that he thinks it can help identify actions and institutional arrangements through which the dignity of a person is harmed. Psychological harm becomes an injustice only if the ethical status of the person is disrespected.²⁵

Second, although Honneth suggests that claims to recognition always derive from subjective experiences and feelings of injustice, he does not suggest that these claims can be justified by referring to psychological descriptions of the involved individuals. Conversely, he suggests that claims to recognition are not only *formed* in social spaces of shared reasons and experiences but must also be *justified* in these spaces, which implies that they must be validated intersubjectively in “social discourses of recognition and justification”.²⁶ Consider one example: When minority groups struggle to redefine or renegotiate the majority’s understanding of ‘equal rights’, they struggle by arguments and reasons and will only succeed if they can convince the majority that it has interpreted the ideal of equality in a one-sided or biased manner. They will not succeed by way of simply referring to subjective feelings of psychological harm.²⁷

1.4 *Justice Reconstructed*

In *Das Recht der Freiheit*, Honneth separates from his initial attempt at basing a critical theory of recognition on a philosophical-anthropological theory of self-realisation.²⁸ Honneth no longer believes that social philosophy can claim to have insight into the universal conditions for successful identity formation, as he did in 1992.²⁹ Particularly inspired by Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, he instead launches a new historical-reconstructive theory of social justice.

25 Cf.: Axel Honneth, “Pathologies of the Social”, in: *Disrespect*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–48. See also: Jean-Philippe Deranty, “Injustice, Violence, Social Struggle: The Critical Potential of Axel Honneth’s Theory of Recognition”, in John Rundell and Danielle Petherbridge *et al.* (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives in Social and Critical Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill, 2005, pp. 297–322.

26 Axel Honneth, “Redistribution as Recognition”, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 160–170.

28 See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011. For an English translation, see: Axel Honneth, *Freedom’s Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014.

29 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

First, Honneth argues that individual freedom or autonomy has become the ultimate normative standard of all constitutive practices and institutions in modern societies, such as in the case of law, morality, personal relations, the market, and democratic will-formation.

Second, he defends the view that to achieve social credibility and practical relevance, a theory of justice must be based on normative premises that are already accepted and socially effective and not on constructed principles or hypothetical contracts.³⁰ Third, through a critical reconstruction of the social histories of modern societies throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Honneth investigates whether the abovementioned value of individual freedom has been effectively realised within our social practices and institutions. Based on an intersubjectivist and Hegelian interpretation of freedom—which he refers to as ‘social freedom’—Honneth concludes that although progress has been achieved in the pursuit of freedom (especially in the domain of personal relations that have been liberated from traditional restraints and role expectations), we have failed to understand and realise the social preconditions for individual freedom in the domains of market relations and democratic will-formation.³¹ Thus, a historically emerged and contingent conception of freedom, rather than a universalist conception of successful identity formation, subsequently forms the basis of Honneth’s theory of justice.

Given that the historical-reconstructive approach can only criticise deviations from—or pathologies within—already established practices and institutions, it can be argued that Honneth’s later political thought has taken an ‘affirmative’ turn compared with previous studies. We assume that some critics will consider *Das Recht der Freiheit* too affirmative in the sense of defending the values and institutions we already have, whereas others will consider that it strikes an appropriate balance between the critique and reconciliation of existing values, practises, and institutions.³²

30 See for example: John Rawls, “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory”, in *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 77, No. 9, 1980, pp. 515–572; John Rawls, “The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus”, in *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1987, pp. 1–25.

31 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., pp. 317–624.

32 See for example: Thomas Nys, “Which Justice, Whose Pathology?”, in *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2013, pp. 10–13; Beate Rössler, “Kantian Autonomy and its Social Preconditions: On Axel Honneth’s *Das Recht der Freiheit*”, in *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2013, pp. 14–18; Bert van den Brink, “From Personal Relations to the Rest of Society”, in *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2013, pp. 23–27; Rutger Claassen, “Justice: Constructive or Reconstructive?”, in *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2013, pp. 28–33; Rutger Claassen, “Social Freedom and the Demands of Justice: A Study of Axel Honneth’s *Recht der Freiheit*”, in

2 A Normative Counter-Proposal to Liberalism

Honneth regards his political philosophy as one of a few contemporary alternatives to modern liberal thought, which is based on the influential tradition of John Rawls.³³ Honneth agrees with liberalism that negative freedom is an indispensable dimension of human freedom, and therefore, one of modernity's most central normative ideas. Nevertheless, he criticises other aspects of what he considers to be 'the general image' of justice in all liberalism's different variants.³⁴ In particular, Honneth argues that liberalism's conception of justice focuses too narrowly on individual freedom, institutional redistribution, and the state.³⁵

2.1 *Individual Freedom*

Regarding the political-liberal approach to individual freedom, Honneth contrarily views freedom as ultimately recognitive and intersubjective:

In the final analysis, the subject is only 'free', if it faces a counterpart [*ein Gegenüber*] with which it is—within the framework of institutional practices—conjoined in reciprocal recognition, because it can catch sight of the realisation of its own goals.³⁶

He concludes, therefore, that

Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory (forthcoming 2013); Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, "The Law of Freedom: Institutionalisation of Freedom in Modern Societies—A Reconstruction and Some Remarks", in *Nordicum-Mediterraneum*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2012.

33 For Honneth's critique of both Rawls, see: Axel Honneth, *Disrespect*, *op. cit.*, Ch. 10–13; Axel Honneth, "Limits of Liberalism: On the Political-Ethical Discussion Concerning Communitarianism", in *The Fragmented World of the Social: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995/1990, Ch. 14; Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010/2001, pp. 26–27.

34 Axel Honneth, "The Fabric of Justice", *op. cit.*, p. 40.

35 For accounts which attempt to transcend these challenges within the Rawlsian framework, see for example: Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979; Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, New York: Basic Books, 1989; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

36 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 86 (our translation).

The formula ‘being oneself in another’ always includes a reference to social institutions, because only stabilised and learned practices secure that the participating subjects can recognise each other as each-other’s other.³⁷

Although Honneth admits that the liberal focus on individual rights and liberties does not necessarily imply an isolation of the subject, he argues that liberalism too easily lends rhetorical support to the general image of freedom in our time, namely that “social bonds can generally be regarded as a limitation on individual freedom”.³⁸ He argues that this image has given rise to the problematic idea among the broader population that a just society must secure as much independence as possible *from* each other for all subjects, rather than securing those kinds of freedom we can only have *with* each other.³⁹ However, this is a controversial interpretation of liberalism, especially in its Rawlsian variant, which explicitly stresses “the social bases of self-respect”⁴⁰ in modern societies and “the social nature of human relationships”.⁴¹

2.2 *Economical Redistribution*

According to Honneth, the individualistic conception of freedom in political liberalism is closely related to the importance of redistribution. By suggesting that redistribution is a significant feature of liberal theory, Honneth refers to Rawls’ seminal work *A Theory of Justice*. Here, Rawls argues that a just society must secure a basic scheme of negative rights and liberties for its citizens and that social and economic inequalities must satisfy two conditions: they must be attached to offices and positions that are accessible to everyone under conditions of a fair equality of opportunity; and they must benefit the least advantaged members of society. Primary goods, such as money or career opportunities, must be distributed according to principles of freedom, equality, and fairness for the least advantaged.⁴²

According to Honneth, this model neglects that we can only understand money or career opportunities as primary goods if we have already formed a conception of the aims that we consider worthy of pursuit. Here, one may

37 *Ibid.* (our translation).

38 *Ibid.* (our translation).

39 *Ibid.*

40 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. 82, 106.

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 278–281. See also Morten Raffnsøe-Møller’s chapter in this volume.

42 See: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

think of personal capacities that one might realise by selecting a specific career. Honneth suggests that this conception can only emerge in social relations of recognition. The primary ‘fabric’ of justice, therefore, does not exist in a “pre-formed, thing-like state—something that subjects can accumulate individually” as this material is relational and intersubjective.⁴³ Therefore, to understand and appreciate redistributed goods as viable goods, we must already be autonomous. And autonomy—as an achievement of recognition—cannot be distributed.

2.3 *The State and Beyond*

The final main critique of Honneth against liberalism regards what can be described as ‘statism’. Although this phenomenon can assume many forms, his viewpoint is that political liberalism has a rather restricted focus on the legally regulating institutions of the constitutional state.⁴⁴

As previously noted, the aim of Honneth’s theory of justice is broader as it considers societal spheres such as family life or work life as equally relevant to questions of justice, recognition, and freedom.⁴⁵ With regards to family, Honneth writes that, “after all, the family is the place where the emotional groundwork is laid for our self-confidence and our capacity to articulate needs”.⁴⁶ And Honneth mentions the important role played by nongovernmental organisations and other voluntary social movements that struggle for justice at different levels of society, say, family-like self-help groups, trade unions, church communities, or other civilian groups.⁴⁷

2.4 *A Comprehensive Doctrine?*

Liberals are not only likely to defend themselves against the claim that their theories are too individualist, too oriented at distribution, and too state-centred but are also likely to object that Honneth’s own theory is a ‘reasonable

43 Axel Honneth, “The Fabric of Justice”, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

44 For a critique of what can be viewed as Honneth’s own methodological statism, or nationalism, see for example: Volker Heins, “Realising Honneth: Redistribution, Recognition, and Global Justice”, in *Journal of Global Ethics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2008, pp. 141–153; Jonathan Seglow, “Rights, Contribution, Achievement and the World: Some thoughts on Honneth’s Recognitive Ideal”, in *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 61–75; Heikki Ikäheimo, “Globalising Love: On the Nature and Scope of Love as a Form of Recognition”, in *Res Publica*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2012, pp. 11–24.

45 For a similar critique within the Rawlsian framing, see: Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, *op. cit.*

46 Axel Honneth, “The Fabric of Justice”, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

47 *Ibid.*

comprehensive doctrine' in John Rawls's sense. In other words, it can be argued that Honneth's stance represents a controversial, philosophical theory that attempts to answer questions that citizens may reasonably disagree on. Rawls's point is that 'the burdens of judgment' make it unlikely that reasonable citizens will ever agree on deep philosophical or religious questions concerning the good life and full human freedom, and that political philosophy should not try to answer such questions for them.⁴⁸ Citizens have a right to form their *own* worldviews or 'comprehensive doctrines'.

Thus, when considered as contributions to normative political philosophy, the early Honneth's theory of self-realization and the later Honneth's Hegelian conception of social freedom appear to be problematic from a Rawlsian perspective. According to Rawls, the task of general political philosophy and the task of the conceptualisation of constitutional democracy, in particular, is to avoid claims to "universal truth" and claims about the "essential nature and identity of persons".⁴⁹ He also suggests that we should reject 'metaphysical' claims and be independent with regards to "controversial philosophical and religious doctrines".⁵⁰

One does not need to be a Rawlsian to argue that Honneth's theory of justice (early or late) is based on 'thick' and controversial claims about human identity-formation and freedom—claims that all citizens cannot be expected to accept. As we saw, also Fraser argues that Honneth should have separated between (thick) theories of self-realisation and (thin) theories of justice. And Bert van den Brink argues that Honneth's early philosophical anthropology is not 'formal' in the way that it is intended to be, namely, as a mere "abstraction from all existing forms of life", but is an "essentially contested" theory that is deemed to be controversial amongst different groups of citizens.⁵¹ In a more recent essay, van den Brink suggests that the conception of freedom in *Das Recht der Freiheit* also presupposes the acceptance of particular secular-liberal values, which some citizens—i.e. conservative or religious groups—may reasonably reject. Commenting on Honneth's analysis of freedom in the sphere of

48 For Rawls' distinction between reasonable (e.g. post-metaphysical) and non-reasonable (e.g. metaphysical) comprehensive doctrines, as well as the notion of the burdens of judgment, respectively, see: John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11 ff., 377–378.

49 John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 223.

50 *Ibid.*

51 Bert van den Brink, "Recognition, Pluralism and the Expectation of Harmony: Against the Ideal of an Ethical life 'Free from Pain'", in Danielle Petherbridge (ed.), *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays*, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

personal relations, he asks the following question: “conservative members of society—think of orthodox Christians or Muslims—lead different lives from many of us, but are they somehow failing to live up to the normative core of personal relations in modern society?”⁵²

In addition to defending the ‘formal’ or metaphysically uncontroversial status of his political ethics, Honneth would most likely reply that the contemporary obsession with neutrality in political philosophy hinders us from critically analysing important dimensions of social and political reality, such as social suffering and injustice, societal pathologies and misdevelopments. In his contribution to this volume, for example, he argues that our fixation on state neutrality is one of the main reasons that modern political philosophy does not include the important theme of education in its field of inquiry. As Honneth suggests, political thought has lost its faith in the value of a public school system aimed at the education of ‘good citizens’.

Regardless of where we stand in this academic dispute, that is, no matter how ‘thin’ or ‘thick’ we consider Honneth’s political thought to be, and how ‘thin’ or ‘thick’ we may argue that political thought *should* be, tensions between liberal minimalism and more extensive theories of modernity, self-realisation and freedom are likely to persist in future political-philosophical controversies. Within this complex framework, we propose—as should be evident in subsequent chapters—that Honneth’s normative counterproposal to liberalism is extraordinarily rich in its thematic scope and refreshingly ambitious in its attempt to reconnect normative political theory and empirically informed social analysis.

3 Contributions

In both Honneth’s and Simon Laumann Jørgensen’s contribution (Chapters 1 and 2), the school is a point of departure. Honneth and Laumann Jørgensen attempt to demonstrate the significance of this social institution not only to educate pupils but also to support the learning process, which is considered a premise to becoming an active citizen. Honneth refers to the latter goal as ‘good citizenship’, whereas Lauman Jørgensen introduces the notion of ‘civic equality’. In the end, education and the school system are considered to be a social precondition of democracy.

52 Bert van den Brink, “From Personal Relations to the Rest of Society”, in *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2013, pp. 23–27, p. 26.

The two next chapters by Arto Laitinen and Heikki Ikäheimo (Chapters 3 and 4) focus on the notion of social solidarity. Within the framework of the welfare state, both authors apply Honneth's concept of recognition as 'esteem' to discuss the cases of basic income (Laitinen) and social work (Ikäheimo). Laitinen elaborates the Honnethian ideal of politics in terms of what he refers to as 'politics of esteem'. Ikäheimo formulates the previously mentioned democratic ideal as a type of 'cooperative valuing'. In both cases, solidarity is considered a prepolitical condition for a recognition-based approach to democracy.

Morten Raffnsøe-Møller and Arne Johan Vetlesen (Chapters 5 and 6) discuss the notion of individual freedom by focusing on neo-liberalism and political liberalism, respectively. Similar to Honneth, both authors defend the necessity of socially and institutionally structuring individual freedom as outlined here. They also argue that Honneth has more to learn from Hegel than he is willing to admit. According to Vetlesen, Honneth should have paid more attention to Hegel's analysis of state-based 'corporations'. Raffnsøe-Møller argues that Hegel's analysis of the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of human subjectivity is neglected in Honneth's recent analysis of social freedom in *Das Recht der Freiheit*.

In Chapter 7, Odin Lysaker argues that the presence of Hegel in later works of Honneth is too strong and should be supplemented by a 'Heideggerian' approach. Lysaker concludes that the morality of political conflicts, which can be found in Honneth's bodily anthropology, can be reactualised as a 'democratic grammar' if this approach is adopted. Lysaker demonstrates the fruitfulness of this grammar by addressing the public discourse on the prospects of democracy in Norway after the terror attacks on July 22, 2011.

The chapters by Jonas Jakobsen and Arvi Särkelä (Chapters 8 and 9) address the difficulties Honneth experienced with incorporating cultural identities and struggles into his theory. Jakobsen compares Honneth with anthropologist Saba Mahmood, whereas Särkelä compares Honneth with Finnish sociologist Erik Allardt. Jakobsen discusses the case of the Danish cartoon controversy and argues that the cultural deficit in Honneth can be resolved through a reinterpretation of the concepts of 'disesteem', 'respect' and 'solidarity'. Conversely, Särkelä introduces the theme of culture by treating struggles for recognition in a 'pragmatic' manner, namely, through a problem-solving process.

Carl-Göran Heidegren and Jørgen Pedersen (Chapters 10 and 11) discuss the historical-reconstructive methodology in Honneth's recent major work *Das Recht der Freiheit*. Heidegren compares Honneth's approach with the approach of Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma*. Myrdal

sheds light on interesting aspects of the immanent critique in Honneth's political thought. In Pedersen's chapter, Honneth's methodology is analysed and compared with Habermas' reconstructive approach. This comparison enables Pedersen to discuss some potentials as well as problems with regards to Honneth's reconstruction of social freedom in the sphere of the market and democratic will-formation.

Raffnsøe-Møller's timely interview with Honneth on *Das Recht der Freiheit* (Chapter 12) concludes the book. Here, Honneth and Raffnsøe-Møller critically address the main intentions and themes of the book and they discuss Honneth's hopes and concerns for the future of democracy and solidarity.

Education and the Democratic Public Sphere

A Neglected Chapter of Political Philosophy

Axel Honneth

Ever since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, the history of the public education system in democratic constitutional states has been a history of conflicts over the structure, form, and content of the instruction provided in schools. Neither the stratification of the school system nor the teaching methods or the curricula remained unaffected by the acrimonious disputes between state agencies on the one side and representatives of social groups and parents' associations on the other. The state's recognition of a right on the part of each citizen to receive an education had an explosive potential which Immanuel Kant may have anticipated in the following sentence from his lectures on pedagogy: "Two human inventions can probably be regarded as the most difficult, namely the arts of government and education; and yet there is still controversy about their very idea".¹ For Kant, the parallel between the art of government and the art of education was suggested by the fact that both are socially created practices fulfilling the same function, albeit in the distinct dimensions of species history and individual history, phylogeny and ontogeny. Through the prudent choice of means and methods, which is to say, in an 'artful' way, both are meant to instruct us on how to effect a transition from a state of 'minority' to a state of freedom: be it with regard to a whole people, consisting of individual subjects, or be it with regard to a child still subjected to the rule of nature within himself. What initially looks like a mere analogy is developed far beyond that in the course of Kant's lectures, where he points out that education and a republican political order mutually presuppose each other. The young human being, governed by nature, has to undergo

* The manuscript is translated by Felix Koch, and was originally published in German. See: Axel Honneth, "Erziehung und demokratische Öffentlichkeit: Ein vernachlässigtes Kapitel der politischen Philosophie", in *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 429–442, 2012. It had previously been given as a keynote lecture at the opening of the 23rd congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft in 2012.

1 Immanuel Kant, "Lectures on Pedagogy", (1803), in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 434–485, p. 441.

an educational process aimed at freedom before he can become a member of a self-governing political community; conversely, only autonomous citizens are able to institutionalise a system of public education that enables their children to attain political maturity. Good upbringing and a republican political order require each other because the former, in the form of public education, first produces the cultural and moral capacities that make it possible for the latter to exist and thrive in such a way that the active citizens even take an interest in the political emancipation of the lower orders of society. As in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile*, Kant's *Pedagogy* draws on the idea of the 'good citizen' as a link between pedagogic theory and the theory of government, between a conception of education and political philosophy.² Neither could exist without the other, since both spell out inseparable preconditions of a democratic political community.

It is this very close, internal interrelation that explains why within the political and philosophical discourse of modernity virtually no notable theorist of democracy has failed to offer a systematic contribution to educational theory. Beginning with Rousseau and Kant, through Friedrich Schleiermacher, and up to Émile Durkheim and John Dewey, numerous important thinkers found it natural to devote entire books to the subject of public education.³ They thought of pedagogy, conceived as the theory of the standards and methods of the adequate teaching of children, as the twin sister of democratic theory. Without proper reflection on how to render a child both capable of cooperation and morally independent, it seemed to them impossible to explain what it could mean to speak of the project of democratic self-determination. The idea of the 'good citizen' was not an empty phrase or an ornament for political speeches but a practical challenge calling for the theoretical elaboration and even the experimental testing of suitable school types and teaching methods. Thus, when it came to the challenge of re-habituating an entire population—the German one—to the practices of democratic politics that had been systematically eradicated under National Socialism, the American occupying forces found it natural to draw on the pedagogical writings of Dewey.⁴ The ties between democratic theory and pedagogical practice were still so close, and the internal relation between them still appeared so obvious,

2 *Ibid.*, p. 484.

3 Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Über den Beruf des Staates zur Erziehung", in *Texte zur Pädagogik: Kommentierte Studienausgabe* (Vol. 1), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000, pp. 272–290; Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2011; John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, New York: Free Press, 1997.

4 On 're-education', see: Walter Gagel (2005): *Geschichte der politischen Bildung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945–1989/90*, Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Ch. 2.

that the project of teaching democratic habits to the demoralised citizens of a thoroughly destroyed unjust state was not perceived as objectionably paternalistic. Since then, however, the conceptual link between democracy and education, and between political philosophy and pedagogy, has been severed. To be sure, efforts are still made to reinvigorate theoretical reflection on democratic education, but nowadays these efforts tend to come from a pedagogical discourse abandoned by philosophers; they are no longer at the centre of political philosophy itself. Democratic theory in all its manifold guises and voices tends to be silent on the pedagogical aspect of its subject matter. It has nothing to offer with regard to either the methods or the contents of primary and secondary education. Political philosophy today seems to have lost the insight that a thriving democracy must continually reproduce the cultural and moral preconditions of its own existence by way of general educational processes. These remarks on the intimate relation between education on the one hand and political freedom and democracy on the other are merely preliminary, and I will elaborate them in more detail in the second part of my chapter. Before I do that, I will in the first part venture an explanation for the decoupling of pedagogy from political philosophy. It will turn out that the reasons for this development are found in the confluence of two causes that have, as it were, an elective affinity with each other: first, a certain problematic conception of the cultural presuppositions of democracy; second, a misunderstanding of the idea of the neutrality of the state. Once I have my case for a rapprochement between the two areas in both negative and positive terms, I will proceed in a third step to outline the challenges faced by a reinvigorated program of democratic education. Since an extended treatment of this last point would require much more space than I have available here, I will limit myself to some brief remarks with regard to it.

1 The Decoupling of Pedagogy from Political Philosophy

Whereas Kant, Durkheim, and Dewey considered the topic of democratic education an intrinsic part of their respective projects in political philosophy, its role in contemporary normative democratic theory has become a marginal one. It is still occasionally mentioned, and introductory texts sometimes identify it as a part of the general subject matter of political philosophy, but its proper delimitation and development is left to educational theory.⁵ Democratic

5 An important exception is the political philosopher Amy Gutmann, although she only accords a subordinate role to the tradition discussed here. See: Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

theory has uncoupled itself from its twin sister, the study of the adequate organisation and methods of democratic education, and it has thereby deprived itself of the chance to make a proper contribution regarding the normative functions of pre-school, primary and secondary education, and adult education. Some might rest content with observing that this development simply reflects a more general differentiation of scientific disciplines over the course of the past two hundred years. Just as philosophy in the second half of the nineteenth century parted ways with social theory, which then established itself as the discipline of sociology, so, too, the increasing specialisation of philosophy required it to withdraw from the project of determining the educational processes required for the development of mature democratic politics. But it is quite apparent that things are not so simple when one considers that political philosophy constantly encounters the problem of education without having so much as the beginnings of a solution to it. With the political establishment of compulsory education, state administered schooling has become a crucial instrument for forming the habits and abilities of each new generation, influencing future citizens for better or for worse. The type, methods, and contents of school education may affect a democracy either in positive ways—for example by fostering cooperativeness and individual self-esteem—or in negative ones, gradually undermining democracy by teaching moral conformism and unquestioning obedience to authority.⁶ Thus the question regarding the proper kind of state-mandated education has been at the heart of political philosophy from its very inception—just think of Plato's *Republic*.⁷ Any serious reflection on the question how a state or a political community should be constituted given the fundamental features of human nature has had to confront the closely related question what and whom to teach, and by what methods to do so. The fact that this question has nowadays largely vanished from political philosophy and is no longer being pursued by it in either positive or negative terms cannot be due simply to the thought that the topic can be more productively and more adequately pursued by a specialised discipline. The problem of state-organised education is far too central to political agency and far too consequential with regard to the possibility of democracy and the rule of law for it to be straightforwardly separable from the theory or philosophy of

6 The political philosophy of Louis Althusser is one context where schools figure in this 'negative' role. See: Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971, pp. 127–186, esp. pp. 154–157.

7 Plato, *The Republic*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992, esp. Book v; John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–91.

politics. If we wish to explain the current separation between democratic theory and educational theory we must therefore look to causes other than the progressive differentiation of academic disciplines. I suspect that the explanation will be located at a more fundamental, conceptual level having to do with a proper demarcation of the extent to which democracy is able to affect itself. As a rule of thumb we can say that this extent will be more limited the less a democratic state is able to influence the conditions of its own existence, be it due to normative constraints or because of its operative limitations. When this space for self-generating activity on the part of the democratic state is thought of as being quite confined, the political significance accorded to school education will be correspondingly reduced, since it is then no longer regarded as a powerful instrument of change. It seems to me that theoretical shifts of this sort—that is to say, a certain disillusionment about the self-generative powers of democratic communities—are primarily responsible for the fact that school education and its administration by the state receive only scant attention from political philosophers today. Let me mention two of the theoretical sources that may account for the fact that over the past few decades, democratic theory has unwittingly and through almost imperceptible changes lost its faith in the value that state-run education has for democracy. To be sure one could cite other causes besides these, such as the observation that children's characters are formed through socialisation in early childhood and thus during a developmental phase over which the state has little control. But I will restrict myself to the following two aspects, since they fall squarely within the domain of political philosophy properly speaking.

First, the idea that the liberal democratic state has only a very limited ability to regenerate the moral and cultural resources on which it relies may owe its currency in part to the view defended by the German constitutional lawyer Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde (and therefore often referred to as the Böckenförde theorem) that a democratic state depends for its reproduction on a supply of cultural traditions that themselves precede democracy. Although Böckenförde seems originally to have intended this view in a rather narrow sense, as pertaining to the ethical preconditions for the functioning of modern legal systems, his thesis is nowadays given a much broader interpretation, and is taken to refer to the cultural dependency of democratic constitutional states quite generally.⁸ On this more general reading, democratic political systems require the cultural support of ethical customs and habits whose cultivation and flourishing these systems themselves lack the means to promote. At the

8 Cf.: Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "Freiheit und Recht, Freiheit und Staat", in *Recht, Staat, Freiheit*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006, pp. 42–57.

most general level, the so-called Böckenförde theorem is even taken to assert that democracies owe their social survival to the existence of moral attitudes that can thrive only in tradition-oriented communities governed by substantive ethical or even religious conceptions. Once this last view is adopted, it is only a short step to the conclusion that state-run educational processes, that is to say school and pre-school education, lack any value for the formation of democratic habits and attitudes. For whatever moral attitudes facilitate cooperative political decision-making—tolerance, empathy, a concern for the common good—, they are acquired not as a response to school teaching, no matter how well thought out, but solely through processes of ethical socialisation within pre-political communities. Whereas in Böckenförde there are at least some hints that “education and schooling” are capable of fulfilling the relevant functions, the common reception of his view reduces it to the claim that democratic societies are forced to rely on the survival of tradition-based ethical communities.⁹ All efforts on the part of the state to ensure a general democratic education are thought to be in vain, since they are held to be unable to generate the ethical virtues whose existence is vital to the continued functioning of any democracy.

The increasingly widespread adoption of this view within political philosophy is likely to be one of the factors that have led recent democratic theory to avoid questions regarding public education. Such questions are bound to appear irrelevant to the extent to which it is assumed that democratic dispositions are acquired not through state-mediated educational processes but rather in the pre-political environments furnished by tradition-oriented communities. Yet the popular version of the Böckenförde theorem is not the only thing that accounts for the increasing distance taken by contemporary democratic theory from its twin sister, educational theory. The tendency just described is met from another, more normative direction by the tendency to construe the idea of state neutrality in such a demanding way that even the principles of democratically organised collective decision-making are no longer permitted to shape public school education.

Just like the culturally conservative re-interpretation of democracy, according to which the latter can survive only thanks to a supply of cultural traditions that precede it, so too the radicalisation of the ideal of state neutrality has taken place as it were behind the backs of political philosophers, rather than having been consciously intended by them. It may even be that this second theoretical shift has been an unintended consequence of a well-intentioned effort to accommodate the increasing plurality of ethnic and religious cultures

9 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

within contemporary society by emphasising the strict impartiality of state-administered education. Of course, the degree of state neutrality has always been subject to changes in political attitude that reflect, albeit in complex ways, the ethical convictions of a majority and thereby a variable balance of social power. Ultimately, the only constraint that the ideal of neutrality imposes on the legitimacy of a political commitment to substantive values is simply that the universalist principles of democratic constitutions must not thereby be violated. In the long-standing debate over the inevitable partiality of the state's activity, the tradition from Kant to Durkheim and Dewey that I identified earlier took it for granted that state-administered education should embody exactly those values that led to the decision to make such education compulsory for all future citizens in the first place. The right of the parents to impart to their children their own particular values had to end at the school door, so that the pupils could then practice the reflective habits that would enable them to take part in the process of joint public decision-making. But if it once appeared completely natural for school teaching to be geared towards the democratic procedures that were operative in making school attendance obligatory in the first place, doubts are increasingly voiced today. Some appeal to the constraint of state neutrality to caution against overburdening school education with political values alien to its purpose; others, for example concerned parents, complain that placing too much emphasis on the theme of democracy might get in the way of promoting career skills. When these kinds of well-worn reservations meet with unexpected public support owing to the growth of multiculturalism, which does in fact speak in favour of removing certain ideological relics from our schools, we are faced with a vague mixture of truths and falsehoods that leads to the rejection of all forms of partiality in school education as equally harmful or objectionable. The political constraint of state neutrality is thereby extended to the point where even the very idea of a democratic education is no longer a matter of normative common sense.

To be sure, these radicalised conceptions of state neutrality have not yet become pervasive in contemporary political philosophy. There is an on-going debate about how to properly adapt this part of the legacy of liberal political thought to the increasing heterogeneity of cultural values in present-day societies.¹⁰ But when we take into account the culturally conservative re-interpretations of the survival conditions of democracy that I was describing earlier, we can discern a theoretical development that may well result in the

10 Cf.: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971; Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice: Political Philosophy beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002/1996, pp. 68–79.

view that the methods and contents of state-administered education must be purged of all democratic goals. This is the direction indicated, for example, by proposals that schools should be in charge only of an educational ‘civic minimum’, that parents should be given vouchers allowing them to choose educational options with this or that specific ideological tendency, or that teachers should no longer be considered as state agents but rather as answerable solely to the parents.¹¹ However tentative such considerations may initially be, the further they are taken—and the more public schools thus come to be thought of as subject to the constraint of ethical neutrality, in juxtaposition to a plurality of ethically committed private schools—the greater becomes the threat to one of the very few instruments that a democratic society has at its disposal to regenerate its own ethical foundations. In this way conflicts over a state-run school system—regardless of whether they concern its structure, curriculum, or methods—are always at the same time conflicts over the sustainability of democracy. No philosophical tradition was more aware of this nexus than the one initiated by Kant and culminating in the work of Durkheim and Dewey.

2 Educating ‘Good Citizens’

The considerations I have advanced so far have been of a negative sort. The criticism of some tendencies in contemporary democratic theory has already revealed the premises on which we will have to rely, if we are looking to understand the public school system as a necessary complement of democratic decision-making, and in fact as an integral and prior part of it. We have seen that we must neither sacrifice the guiding hypothesis that it is possible for education to foster the capacity for public deliberation even outside the specific contexts of early childhood socialisation and traditional ethical communities, nor must we jeopardise the authority of the constitutional state to infuse democratic goals into the educational structures it sets up. Viewed from a positive angle, we can say that foremost among the tasks of a democratic constitutional

11 Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 65, 292–303; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic Books, 1983, pp. 217–220. On tendencies of this sort see especially: François Dubet, “L’égalité et le mérite dans l’école démocratique de masse”, in *L’Année sociologique*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2002, pp. 383–408, pp. 101–104. The thought that teachers should think of themselves as agents of the democratic state and not as agents of the parents, extending the latter’s original authority to a more advanced life stage of their children, is Durkheim. See: Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, *op. cit.*

state is the task to provide educational opportunities that will equally enable each of its future citizens to participate in the public legitimation of his or her own choices 'without fear or shame'. In Kant's treatise on education, which was strongly influenced by Rousseau's *Émile* without following it in every respect, this general idea results only in a defence of 'public' education, accessible to all, against the champions of 'domestic' education. The advantage of the former, according to Kant, is that it can foster in each pupil the virtues and capacities of a 'future citizen' while sidestepping the danger of perpetuating 'family mistakes'.¹² Everything that such educational processes are meant to impart—first, mechanical skills; second, pragmatic prudence; third, moral autonomy—is subordinate, in Kant's view, to the goal of creating within the individual a corresponding number of layers of self-respect and self-esteem, which taken together allow him to act with self-confidence as citizen of a republic.¹³ The question of how these three sets of pedagogically imparted abilities are supposed to contribute to the exercise of a profession in adult age does not arise here at all, since all these abilities are considered solely for the contribution they make to an individual's acquisition of various kinds of self-esteem. Kant anticipates a famous thought found in the work of John Rawls when he maintains that a future citizen must first and foremost have access to the key good of 'self-respect' before he is able to participate in republican self-legislation as an equal among equals.¹⁴ Professional skills, civic competence, and moral principles are here conceived of not primarily as teachable means by which individuals are enabled to secure an income for themselves, but rather as generalised media of social recognition, which the young acquire through a pedagogical process and which gradually make them aware of possessing a certain 'worth' or 'value' in the eyes of others. By learning technical skills, the young person gains respect "with regard to himself as an individual" (as Kant puts it, almost in the same words later used by Hegel); the acquisition of civic

12 Immanuel Kant, "Lectures on Pedagogy", *op. cit.*, p. 447. Almost the same thought is articulated by Schleiermacher: "Looking at the history of our modern world, we encounter certain times where entire peoples were awoken by from their long-lasting stupor and crudeness only thanks to the fact that their governments took up the reins of this important business and undertook by other means to arouse in the younger generation the higher powers which the older generation, in whom these powers were lacking or had died away, was not able to awaken by the normal path of domestic education." See: Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Über den Beruf des Staates zur Erziehung", *op. cit.*, p. 272.

13 Immanuel Kant, "Lectures on Pedagogy", *op. cit.*, p. 448.

14 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 440–446.

knowledge affords him 'public worth' as a citizen; and the acquisition of moral principles earns him "value in view of the entire human race".¹⁵

Despite all his remarkable insight regarding the interrelation between general public education and reciprocal recognition within a republican political community, Kant is still quite far away from drawing conclusions with regard to the proper methods and organisation of school teaching. He is thinking of the individual male pupil who is to develop self-esteem through the pedagogically mediated acquisition of knowledge, rather than of a cooperative community where each individual must be able to act as a recognised member in concert with all others for the purpose of joint decision-making. While at some points of his *Pedagogy* Kant senses that a republic has a much greater need for fostering the communicative virtues than it has for simply imparting knowledge, he still recoils from the consequence of identifying the public school first and foremost as a place where democratic capacities are formed.¹⁶ This step is taken about one hundred years later by Durkheim and Dewey, both of whom seek in their works to elucidate the internal relation between education and democracy, between learning at school and becoming a democratic citizen.¹⁷

Even though the basic assumptions made by each of these two thinkers appear to be in deep conflict with those of the other—on one side, the sociologist with scientific inclinations; on the other, the vocal exponent of pragmatism in philosophy—their reflections on democratic education share a surprising range of features. Among the three functions that a contemporary perspective would attribute to education in primary and secondary schools—to provide essential qualifications for entering a profession, to compensate educational deficits stemming from family or social background, and to offer a general preparation for the role of citizen—Durkheim and Dewey focus exclusively on the last. For them, just as for Kant, the acquisition of professional knowledge is merely a side product of the training of democratic dispositions; and the task of educational compensation is thought to lie with the individual community that is each particular school. In justifying the state's authority to put the tax-funded educational system in charge of generating civic capacities, both thinkers advance similar arguments (to the extent that they think arguments are needed here). If it is granted that the introduction of compulsory schooling by the state can be conceived as a democratically legitimate act only

15 Immanuel Kant, "Lectures on Pedagogy", *op. cit.*, p. 448.

16 Kant calls these democratic capacities 'cosmopolitan dispositions'. They are addressed in his *Pedagogy* only occasionally. Cf. for example: Immanuel Kant, "Lectures on Pedagogy", *op. cit.*, p. 485.

17 Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, *op. cit.*

when it is interpreted as joint civic effort to equally enable all citizens to exercise their political rights, then it is not cogent to abrogate the state's right to use school teaching to train the requisite abilities and practices.¹⁸

Yet, such considerations at the level of democratic theory constitute only the general framework within which Durkheim and Dewey develop their more detailed studies regarding the content and structure of school education. Here again, we find significant parallels between their respective arguments. Their common point of departure is the thesis that to prepare for the role of citizen is less a matter of acquiring the right kind of knowledge than it is a matter of acquiring certain practical habits. What the pupils should learn in school is not primarily testable knowledge of political or historical facts, but rather modes of conduct that enable self-confident action within a cooperative community. It may not come as a particular surprise that the pragmatist Dewey was led in this direction and came to view schools above all as places where a public engages in communal inquiry.¹⁹ But how it is that a similar line is taken by Durkheim, who likewise looks at schools for how they can train the capacity for democratic cooperation, is something that I will need to briefly elaborate on.

In contrast to Dewey, who was much more optimistic in this regard, Durkheim is initially guided by the Kantian idea that a child's innately egoistic inclinations need to be curbed by moral discipline before it can learn to autonomously conform to the social rules of a democratic community. Yet he departs from his philosophical teacher in picturing this preparatory educational process as proceeding more smoothly and with greater chances of success the more it engages the child's passions and desires, that is to say, her sensible nature, for example by drawing on practical role models and playful activity.²⁰ Thus for Durkheim the overcoming of infantile egoism is not in fact a process of moral discipline, even though he repeatedly describes it as such; it is rather a process of affective habituation. By participating in practices that are adequate to her in that they engage her inclinations, the child initially comes to master at a merely habitual level the rules of democratic existence that it should later, with increasing age, come to comprehend in their rational validity. With regard to schools and their methods of education, the conclusions Durkheim reaches on the basis of these revisions of Kant's view are almost the same ones at which Dewey arrives from his quite different Hegelian premises:

18 Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, *op. cit.*, Ch. 2.

19 On Dewey's pedagogic theory as a whole, see: Jürgen Oelkers, *John Dewey und die Pädagogik*, Weinheim und Basel: Beltz, 2009.

20 Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, *op. cit.*, pp. 271 ff.

through cooperative learning, through active participation in all the school's affairs and through communal rather than individualised kinds of criticism and encouragement, pupils should be habituated early on to acquire the spirit of democratic cooperation that will allow them in adult age to present themselves with self-confidence in the public political arena. Thus, neither of the two thinkers shares the view commonly taken today that the primary goal of school attendance is the development of individual autonomy. Instead, their models of education are shaped by the idea that the pupils should acquire a reliable sense of what it means to treat their fellow pupils as equal partners in a shared process of learning and inquiry. If a public school has the task of engendering in each successive generation the practical dispositions that are vital for the possibility of democratic decision-making, then it must aim at habituating those it seeks to educate into a culture of association,²¹ rather than just at imparting to them a grasp of moral principles. The crucial contribution that school education can make to the regeneration of democracy lies not in teaching individual rules of right action but in a communicative practice that fosters moral initiative and the ability to take up the perspective of others.

We should, of course, note that not only did one hundred years pass between Kant's *Lectures on Pedagogy* and the arguments just presented; another hundred years have passed since then. In view of this long interval some may shake their heads and triumphantly point out that along with the social and economic conditions, the requirements on schooling have radically changed, too. The greatly increased number of pupils, the economic demand for flexibility and motivation, the educational deficits that despite many efforts persist in the lower segments of society—all this seems to leave highly developed capitalist countries with no other choice but to place increasing emphasis in school teaching on selectivity, individualised assessment and the encouragement of competitive behaviour.²² In the United States, politicians, economic experts, and managers are already calling for a thoroughgoing reform of the entire education system, proposing measures whose cumulative effect it would be to make teaching entirely subservient to the goal of transmitting marketable skills. According to these proposals, the effectiveness of all American schools should be subject to on-going quantitative comparison, where the success of individual teachers is measured by their students' placement in nationally

21 For a defence of this idea of an 'associative morality' as a goal for school education, see: Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–64.

22 Cf. the exemplary studies by Dubet. See: François Dubet, "L'égalité et le mérite dans l'école démocratique de masse", in *L'Année sociologique*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2002, pp. 383–408; François Dubet, *Le Déclin de l'Institution*, Paris: Seuil, 2002, Ch. 3.

standardised tests.²³ Controls of this kind, which sooner or later would have the effect of marginalising all subjects not amenable to statistical evaluation, are discussed not only in the United States but also in Europe, as though here, too, one were hoping to subject schools to the dictate of economic developments by employing measurement methods familiar from the financial sector. Given these circumstances, there might seem to be little point in recalling times when public education was regarded as the linchpin of democratic self-renewal. Not only democratic theory but politics itself seems to have lost interest in the only kind of institution that is suited to constantly regenerate, albeit tentatively and with great effort, the fragile preconditions of a people's democratic decision-making.

If these tendencies seem to point to the abandonment of the idea of a democratic education, they are at the same time contradicted by a multitude of empirical findings that have resulted from comparative education studies and from the PISA surveys over the past several years. These data marvelously illustrate what Durkheim and Dewey anticipated in their reflections a century ago, when they insisted on a close correlation between cooperative, democracy-oriented teaching methods on the one hand and pupils' performance at school on the other. The school system that consistently comes out on top in all international comparisons of scholastic achievement is the same one that comes closest to realising the democratic ideals of the two thinkers: in Finnish schools, pupils from different educational background remain in the same schools together as long as possible; tests and examinations are reduced to a bare minimum; communicative responsibility and mutual trust are given much greater weight than individual attributability; and choices regarding teaching methods are made by the professionally trained teachers themselves, in cooperation with student representatives.²⁴ It is true that descriptions of the Finnish school system do not employ the terminology used by Durkheim and Dewey. There is no talk neither of habituation, nor of communal morality or cooperative methods of education. But such re-translations into a language of democratic education could easily be supplied and would then reveal an instance of the rare and fortunate situation where what is politically and normatively right coincides with what is pragmatically useful. The types of school education that are best with a view to pupils' cognitive achievements and abilities turn out to be those that are also most suited to the regeneration of

23 Diane Ravitch, "Schools We Can Envy", in *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2012, p. 19.

24 Pasi Sahlberg, *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?*, New York: Teachers College Press, 2012.

democratic dispositions. In times when talk of growing political apathy is ubiquitous and when some even speak of the threat of 'post-democracy', there is no reason whatsoever not to revive the tradition inaugurated by Kant, Durkheim, and Dewey and to conceive of public education as a crucial instrument for the self-reproduction of democracies.²⁵

3 Challenges for Democratic Education

What I have been saying so far may have created the impression that like the proper methods of democratic education, its contents, too, are fixed once and for all, removed from all historical change. Kant in particular played a part in suggesting such a view, since he tied the acquisition of the necessary forms of civic self-respect to the successive mastery of timelessly valid portions of knowledge. But also Durkheim exhibits a tendency to prescribe a certain fixed subject matter to all processes of cooperative education.²⁶ Only Dewey resisted this tendency, and soberly pointed out throughout his pedagogical writings that along with the various challenges that require public problem solving, the material to be taught in schools must also change. Like Durkheim, he believes that a hierarchical ordering of subjects is indispensable (curiously, he accords the highest rank to geography), but what exactly it is that pupils should cooperatively learn in these disciplines is in his view determined by the historically changing tasks of democratic decision-making.²⁷ Before I end my chapter, I would like in a Deweyan spirit to at least briefly name those two historical challenges whose consequences for our democratic co-existence create a particular need for adjustments in school curricula. In both cases, more detailed considerations would likely show that the challenges cannot be properly treated within the confines of any one individual subject, and that they should rather be addressed more or less across the entire range of the curriculum.

For any observant person there can be no doubt that the digital revolution of our communicative relations will lead to profound changes not only in the ways in which private relationships are initiated and maintained, but also with respect to the processes by which political views are formed. The internet, which brings about both a de-spatialisation and an acceleration of each individual's interactions with others, is creating an ever more quickly growing

25 Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.

26 Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, *op. cit.*, Lectures 17–18.

27 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, *op. cit.*, pp. 190–193.

number of virtual public spheres whose outer boundaries are in permanent flux.²⁸ It is certainly a task of primary and secondary education to prepare schoolchildren both technologically and socially for the use of this new medium. But this hardly exhausts the efforts that will be required to address its historical consequences. It seems to me that it will also be necessary for children to jointly explore both the potentials and the limits and dangers of the new medium by experimentally investigating how digitally disseminated topics and bodies of information are generated.²⁹ This might be done, for instance, by examining the genesis and quality of specific Wikipedia entries. Selective reconstructions of this sort would require the close cooperation of different subjects, since specific knowledge of the relevant fields would be needed over and above purely technical and economic expertise. This one particular example will have to suffice to illustrate the much broader idea that what is needed in our schools today is the ability not merely to use the internet but also to understand its specific mode of production and the range of its effects. In the spirit of Dewey, the cooperative use of computers should prepare the pupils for the mature and responsible use of new instruments of political decision-making.

The digital revolution is the first of the two historical challenges facing the democratic public today. The second one is the increasing heterogeneity of the population of Western countries.³⁰ As with respect to the novel medium that is the internet, so also with regard to multiculturalism few will disagree that schools have to do everything within their powers to prepare their pupils for these changes in the conditions under which public opinion is formed. But here again we need to ask which pedagogical methods and contents will be best suited to this task. The idea of a democratic education that my chapter has tried to recall to us offers an answer to the first part of this question, regarding methods: the less a pupil is treated as an isolated subject meant to deliver a certain performance, and the more he or she is approached as a member of a cooperative learning community, the more likely is the emergence of forms of communication that allow not only for a playful acceptance of cultural differences but that positively conceive of such differences as opportunities for

28 Cf.: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011, pp. 560–567.

29 Following John Dewey, considerations in this direction are developed by Croft. See: Richard S. Croft, “What is a Computer in the Classroom? A Deweyan Philosophy for Technology in Education”, in *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1993–1994, pp. 301–308.

30 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 535–539.

mutual enrichment.³¹ But to point in this way to the power of democratic education to facilitate recognitive relationships does not yet answer the second part of our question, concerning the consequences that the growth of multiculturalism should have for the content of what is taught. Let me close by suggesting that at present we cannot even adequately imagine what that content should look like fifteen or twenty years from now, if fair and equal consideration is to be given to the cultural and ethnic composition of school classes. In order for those future pupils to grow into mature participants in a highly heterogeneous and colourfully mixed public sphere, they will have to learn to approach history, literature, geography and most other subjects from the same sort of decentralised perspective that we today are still struggling to gradually teach ourselves in the context of a number of academic disciplines.

31 On this point, see: Krassimir Stojanov, *Bildung und Anerkennung: Soziale Voraussetzungen von Selbstentwicklung und Welt-Erschließung*, Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006, esp. Ch. 4. On the significance that recognitive relations in schools have for the idea of a democratisation of schools, see: Annedore Prengel, "Zwischen Heterogenität und Hierarchie in der Bildung: Studien zur Unvollendbarkeit der Demokratie", in Luise Ludwig *et al.* (eds.): *Bildung in der Demokratie*, Opladen, Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Verlag, 2011, pp. 83–94.

Recognition, Education, and Civic Equality

Uncovering the Normative Ideals of the Welfare State

Simon Laumann Jørgensen

Scandinavian welfare states try to adapt to the changing expectations of citizens as well as to economic change. To those of us who inhabit such states, it is useful to ask ourselves about the direction these states should be heading. Not to shy away from these questions because of their complexity, we may find guidance in theoretical approaches. Axel Honneth's theory of recognition captures something important about what the welfare state was, is and ought to be. It is worth looking closer at the affinities between his theory and the Scandinavian welfare state and its central institutions.¹

We sometimes talk of the Scandinavian welfare state model as an ideal type in a descriptive sense to set up hypotheses concerning the comparative developments of welfare states. Nevertheless, in this “welfare state modelling business” our attempts to measure changes and paths are also driven by practical concerns of a normative nature.² Both in the case of citizens' common reflections on the quality of their welfare state as in the case of researchers' descriptive practices, the guiding norms need ongoing critical scrutiny.

According to Honneth, normative theoretical “reconstructive approaches (...) uncover normative ideals of the institutions (...) that can be suitable for the criticism of the existing reality”.³ I take this theme of possible criticism

* Thanks to comments from my colleagues at CCWS, Department of Political Science, Aalborg University and the participants at the Annual Meeting of the Danish Philosophical Society, 2012. Special thanks to Morten Raffnsøe-Møller for first introducing me to Axel Honneth's work, for his nuanced criticism as well of encouragement and support of my work over the years, and especially for his insightful comments to this chapter. Thanks as well to the editors for their very helpful comments.

- 1 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996; Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003. See: Frank Nullmeier, *Politische Theorie des Sozialstaats*, Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2000.
- 2 Peter Abrahamson, “The Welfare Modelling Business”, in *Social Policy and Administration*, 33(4): 394–415.
- 3 Axel Honneth, *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 48.

seriously. Policies supporting specific motivations, practices or institutions among citizens may have both *intrinsic* value (due to their expression of intrinsic ideals of freedom and equality) and *instrumental* value (due to their non-expressive, but nevertheless supporting or preconditioning role in bringing about and reproducing intrinsic values). We might hope that Honneth's theory could serve as a standard to measure institutional and social trends in light of both these intrinsic and instrumental perspectives.

Honneth's theory of recognition can be used to reconstruct central welfare state institutions with a critical potential for those institutions themselves. This is because it emphasises the recognitional attitudes of citizens for the realisation of equal citizenship, and because of its moral psychological model of how these attitudes are dependent on the institutionalisation of forms of recognition in society. The ideal of equal citizenship has become a normative expectation of Scandinavian citizens. Equality of citizenship is a norm governing that part of their lives which unfolds within institutions which are taken to be central to the reproduction of welfare state, such as the lower secondary public school.

I shall discuss two corrections to this overall positive answer to the question of whether it is fair to say that the Scandinavian welfare states—or social democracies—come close to realising Honneth's theory. First, to neo-republicans, Honneth's theory might not fully capture the emancipatory aspirations of the welfare state in terms of empowering citizens by overcoming obstacles to their equal political voice in the form of *domination*. Secondly, Scandinavian welfare states traditionally favour more comprehensive state-institutional approaches to the formation of civic citizens than do the approaches suggested by Honneth. Though not fitting into Honneth's systematic scheme of three distinct forms of recognition, and though entailing scepticism concerning Honneth's non-state bases of citizen-formation, Scandinavian public institutions, such as schools, express and promote Honneth's ideal of equal citizenship through relations of recognition that are not accounted for in Honneth's theory.

1 Civic Equality and the Welfare State: The Hermeneutic Approach

Comparing a complex philosophical theory to complex features of a set of historically formed nation states can be conducted in two distinct ways. Either we ask which ideologies formed a society, or we ask whether social practices realise ideals central to specific ideologies. In the first case, we will be concerned with the actual defence for certain policies made by central players

such as the Social Democratic Party. In the latter case, we look for the attitudes and ideological outlook of citizens who have experienced and have been formed by a state's formative institutions.

Both approaches and types of questions would be appropriate in the case of Honneth's philosophical theory, since the theory itself is defended as a normative reconstruction of actual historical tendencies within Western liberal states. When I ask whether this reconstruction is suitable for Scandinavian welfare states, however, I am not asking the first question, but the latter one. As an additional caveat, though I shall primarily focus on the Danish case, this is not an empirical study of Danish citizen attitudes. Rather, it follows a normative hermeneutic approach.

This normative hermeneutic program is partly a mixed approach, since it seeks to demonstrate coherence between (a) the specific sense of equal citizenship and of civic equality which are shaped in citizens on the basis of shared experiences of common schooling over a 9–10 year period, the formative years of a citizen's upbringing in Denmark, (b) typologies of welfare state, and (c) normative 'social democratic' theories.

The approach taken is agnostic as to whether the ideal of equal democratic citizenship was the central ideological guideline for central parties such as the Social Democrats.⁴ The approach is agnostic as well concerning whether attitudes of civic equality have originated from any commitment to democratic ideals.⁵ However, it argues that there is a causal relationship between the

4 According to an analysis by Lars Torpe, the Social Democrats wanted to do away with poverty, ignorance, unemployment and class-determinism and to create the preconditions for equal freedom and communal fellowship expressed through the institution build up since the 1960s. They were not concerned with creating a civic culture of equal democratic citizenship. This, however, was of primary concern to the Social Liberal Party, who played a central role in forming the lower secondary school. See: Lars Torpe, "Den politiske konsensuskultur i Danmark", in *Halvfemserne: Tekster om en fremtid*, in Erik Christensen and Carsten Heyn-Johnsen (eds.), Aalborg: Institut for Økonomi, Politik og Forvaltning, 1991, pp. 105–115, pp. 108–110.

5 Empirical research is likely to reveal that the existing culture of equal citizenship springs from pragmatic politics rather than ideals of democracy. This explanation was in fact suggested by one historian, who argues that politicians broke down the earlier hierarchical system: "social mixing (...) in the schools would lead to a more equitable society promoting talents from all walks of life". See: Susanne Wiborg, *Education and Social Integration: Comprehensive Schooling in Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 5. This suggests a shared political agreement to build up human capital in line with the post-1864 slogan "What's lost abroad must be regained domestically". See: Bo Lidegaard, *A Short History of Denmark in the 20th Century*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2009, p. 33. It is on such grounds, historians might claim, that the Scandinavian school system came to involve "[m]ixed ability

existence of an undivided common school, which in the 1970s came to be clearly founded on ideals of freedom and democratic equality (as directly expressed in the preamble of the Danish primary and lower secondary school law) and citizens' aspirations to be effectively equal to other citizens. This institution has played a key role in forming both: (1) citizens' willingness to accommodate egalitarian policies of equal citizenship (such as radical democratic procedures of deliberative compromises as well as radical policies of redistribution); and (2) an egalitarian everyday culture with recognitional attitudes of civic equality. If these policies and attitudes seem attractive to us, as they appear to me, we may want to know whether Honneth's theory could help explain in which form they are attractive. Additionally his theory might help explain the reproducibility of equal citizenship and civic equality.

Without entering the abovementioned 'welfare state modelling business', I shall simply claim that there is a coherence between (a) citizens' general *support* (for policies of equal citizenship and recognitional attitudes of civic equality) and the fact that (b) in the welfare state typological literature, it is suggested that 'equal citizenship' forms the core normative aspiration of the Scandinavian welfare states.⁶ In a much more elaborated way, I shall show additional coherence with (c) the group of theorists who "argue that the social-democratic tradition offers an (...) account of equality, emphasizing 'social equality' (or 'civic/democratic' equality)".⁷

classes throughout the entire nine/ten-year comprehensive school". See: Susanne Wiborg, *Education and Social Integration*, p. 7. Compare: Ole Morsing, "Har folkeskolen brug for trosbekendelse?", in Lise Andersen, Simon Laumann Jørgensen, and Hanne F. Skovmose (eds.), *Folkeskolens filosofi*, Århus: Philosophia, 2008; The Danish Government, *Et Danmark, der står sammen: Regeringsgrundlag*, 2011, p. 55. Thus, through the struggle for other things, the outcome of the process was that institutions were created early in the twentieth century such as the common public school, where citizens could form the image of themselves as others as at least potentially equal to all other citizens. Key factors in this process were that in contrast to neighboring countries like Britain or Germany, an overlapping consensus bridging liberals and social democrats and marginalizing the conservative party lead to the introduction of common schools early in the 20th century, and that since 1958 the Danish primary schools have been undivided from the 1st to the 9th grade. See: Susanne Wiborg, *op. cit.* Lately, the preschool (year 0) has become obligatory making 10 years of primary schooling mandatory.

6 Jørgen Goul Andersen, "Citizenship, Unemployment, and Welfare Policy", in Jørgen Goul Andersen *et al.* (ed.), *The Changing Face of Welfare: Consequences and Outcomes from a Citizenship Perspective*, Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2005, pp. 75–92.

7 Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 (2nd ed.), p. 202. Kymlicka lists Michael Walzer and David Miller among the theorists, and I shall include—apart from Honneth—Philip Pettit. I will focus on an early article to the neglect of his later developed republican theory. See respectively: Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *Political Studies*, Vol. 35, 1987, pp. 537–551;

These civic-equality theorists seek to answer questions such as: Which obligations do citizens have towards each other if they seek to live up to this ideal? Which obligations does the state have to accommodate the preconditions for civic equality? To defenders of this view, all answers to questions concerning liberties, procedures, compartmentalisations and redistributive schemes are framed by a concern with a specific outcome, namely that of civic equality. To such questions, one can respond with David Miller's apt phrase: "[e]qual citizenship (...) grounds social and economic claims".⁸ These civic equality theorists are distinct from three closely related groups of theorists. First, they are distinct from liberal theorists (who tend to focus on the cognitively demanding attitudes of respecting the liberties of non-interferences that others have as makers of choices, or who focus on respect for procedural rules, or who focus on compartmentalisation between private and public tasks). They should also be distinguished from neo-Marxist approaches (concerned with egalitarian (re)distribution of resources and opportunities). Finally, they should be distinguished from what may be called 'civic egalitarians', these approaches being concerned primarily with effective equality as a moral psychological *experience* based on institutionally grounded relations of recognition.⁹

2 Honneth's Theory of Recognition and Citizen's Equal Status

In the following, I shall demonstrate that the civic equality ideal described above shares with Honneth's theory a concern with describing the preconditions for civic relations of equality, one of these conditions being empowerment. In addition, the civic equality ideal shares with Honneth's theory the insistence on taking a broad perspective on civic relations.¹⁰

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford University Press, 1997. See also: José Luis Martí and Philip Pettit, *A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero's Spain*, Princeton University Press, 2010. To Pettit, 'the social ideal of equal respect for all persons' is *citizens-centered* because of "the notion that every citizen enjoys or ought to enjoy equal respect". See: Phillip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*, p. 538.

8 David Miller, "Democracy and Social Justice", in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 1–19, 1978, p. 4.

9 See: Blain Neufeld and Gordon Davis, "Civic Respect, Civic Education, and the Family", in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2010, pp. 94–111; Carina Fourie, "What is Social Equality? An Analysis of Status Equality as a Strongly Egalitarian Ideal", in *Res Publica*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2012, pp. 107–126.

10 Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice: Political Philosophy beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002/1996.

One of the most famous attempts to describe how a society's continuing specification and interpretation of the ideal of equal citizenship can motivate legal, political and social reforms is Thomas H. Marshall's essay *Citizenship and Social Class*.¹¹ Honneth follows the path laid by Marshall when he argues that "the establishment of each new class of basic rights is consistently compelled by arguments that referred implicitly to the demand for full-fledged membership in the political community".¹² Honneth's progressive story of citizen rights follows the same pattern as that of Marshall, describing how an ideal of equal citizenship eventually leads to social rights:

During the twentieth century, what then emerged from such demands for equality, at least in those Western countries that have followed a welfare state course, was a new class of social welfare rights, which are supposed to assure every citizen the possibility of asserting all his or her other rights-claims.¹³

As can be seen in the quotation, Honneth connects equal citizenship and the progression of rights-ascription to "the possibility of asserting rights-claims". As Honneth explains: "under pressure from struggles for recognition, ever-new prerequisites for participation in rational will-formation have to be taken into consideration".¹⁴ If states fail on this level, citizens can now legitimately claim "the appropriate preconditions (...) for equal participation in the rational agreement".¹⁵

Considering Honneth's close reliance on Marshall's theory of equal citizenship, we might think that to Honneth, civic equality should not be understood in this broad sense, but should rather be understood as civic equality in the narrow *political* sphere. However, as I shall argue in the following, this is not the case.

Marshall, too, was concerned with the general social status of citizenship as well as preconditions for absence of socially based shame. However, in Honneth's view being a citizen is more than just being a political being. It involves the freedom to lead one's own life in general. Therefore, our status

11 Thomas H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 114 f.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

in general—outside a possible specific political sphere—is of central concern as well.

Thus, it turns out that for Honneth (as well as for other theorists within the theoretical social-equality tradition), the prerequisites for equal citizenship relate to the double meaning of autonomous citizenship.¹⁶ The free citizen should be able to both formulate his or her *own* social and political opinions and be able to influence his or her social and political surroundings by these ideas.

There is a different road to a similar insistence on civic equality in the broad sense. Hence, Pettit, though not using the term ‘autonomy’, suggests the same double ground of social reforms when he states that social rights were established on the basis of two political ideals inherent to the ideal of equal citizenship: “(1) the capacity to form preferences and other attitudes in an informed and justifiable manner; and (2) the power to make such attitudes felt”.¹⁷ Overall, the first ideal relates to the democratic ideal of independent and autonomous citizens relative to other citizens and authorities (i.e., the idea that citizens should be able to express their *own* ideas rather than those of others), whereas the second ideal refers to the power of the ‘horizontal’ as well as ‘vertical’ *voice* of citizens (i.e., their ability to give effective voice to their political aspirations to co-citizens and to those in power).

This latter strategy of linking a concern with citizenship as political citizenship with policies that aim at civic equality as a recognitional attitude within both political and broader social spheres can be found in Honneth’s work as well. Related to the first category, that of the capacity for rational preference formation, we find the argument that the state has the function of “securing (with the help of legal norms) the social conditions under which all citizens can articulate their interests without constraint and with equal opportunity”.¹⁸ Equal citizenship translates into the second ideal of effective voice both through representation- and participation enabling policies. As Honneth puts it, in principle “every member of society is accorded all the rights that help to bring about the equal representation of his or her political interests” just as “every member of a political community must be accorded equal rights to participation in the process of democratic will-formation”.¹⁹

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 25, 30, 69, 108, 110, 118, 133.

17 Philip Pettit, “Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State”, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

18 Axel Honneth, “Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today”, in *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 6, pp. 763–783, 1998, p. 775.

19 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–116.

In light of the intrinsic ideal of equal citizenship, social rights in Scandinavian welfare states translate into social security as well as empowering institutions (such as schools) with the aim of empowering citizens' *emancipated* voice and *effective* voice. Effective and equal "opportunity for participation in the public process of will-formation" depends on "a certain social standard of living and degree of economic security" as well as "universal mandatory education" which is 'required for the equal exercise of citizen's rights'.²⁰

If politicians were to ask Honneth for advice concerning which policies would help advance the ideal of emancipated and effective voice, the very Hegelian ending of *The Struggle for Recognition* seems to indicate that Honneth would shy away from giving any further specifications.²¹ Apparently, we would be more likely to find guidance in neo-republican theories of freedom as *non-domination*.²² Such theories offer thick descriptions of "[t]he experience of subordination—of personal subordination" which is expressed through "bowing and scraping, fawning and toadying; (...) fearful trembling; (...) high-and-mightiness" in order to argue more openly that "[t]he aim of political egalitarianism is a society free from domination".²³ Neorepublicans such as Philip Pettit openly admit that "as things stand people are not equally respect-able individuals" and that equal status is not something we can "assume".²⁴ Though such suggestions may appear to be generally in line with Honneth's approach, Pettit and others who warn us against the powers of domination and horizontal inequality seem more alert than Honneth to the threats of domination as well as to the progressive possibilities of state strategies. Scandinavian welfare states might want to follow neo-republican state strategies for overcoming relations of domination while having less faith than Honneth in the progressive force of social movements.²⁵ Though this empirical point can be questioned, at least the point marks a clear difference between

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.

21 See: Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and Paul Sörensen, "Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit: Eine Heranführung an Honneths *Das Recht der Freiheit*", in *Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2012, pp. 247–270.

22 Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic Books, 1983, p. xii. The ideal of non-domination as developed by Philip Pettit in his *Republicanism* is catching on. See: Cecile Laborde, *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. See also: Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice*, *op. cit.*

23 Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

24 Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*, p. 539.

25 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

Honneth's reluctance to philosophically based state policies and the willingness of neo-republicans such as Pettit to suggest progressive state policies.

Rather than measuring the present through the emancipatory potentials of existing institutions, the neo-republicans seem closer to ideologically grounded social democratic politicians who defend the need to ensure equality of resources at "a level of social security that prevents employer exploitation".²⁶ As neo-republicans put it, marginalisation and exposure to domination should be opposed through emancipation "from such conditions as penury, and vulnerability; in particular, vulnerability to sickness and disability". The solution is to provide "social security, public housing, compulsory education, public health care, and the like".²⁷ They suggest an agenda of countering "asymmetries of capacity and power"²⁸ as well as "coercion, exploitation (...) discrimination, marginalization, and the like".²⁹ "[M]anipulation" and "ignorance" should be countered by providing "compulsory education" "freedom of information" and "participatory democracy" so as to stop people from being marginalised and alienated.³⁰ Now to the welfare engineer, such words may nevertheless seem just as elusive as the claims of Honneth in terms of giving guidance. I may have been overstating a non-existing difference here, given that Pettit has also defended a procedural democratic model for setting up the actual levels of welfare provisions.³¹

3 Honneth and the Reproduction of the Welfare State

Combining the intrinsic value of equality of citizens with the instrumental value of social reproducibility, the following three motivational tasks become central to Honneth's project. First, citizens must be politically alert and engaged so that they are prepared to fight for and care for equal citizenship. Second, citizens need to support equality-supporting policies and to be willing to support the preconditions for political participation of all citizens. Third, in their political interaction, citizens need to give each other a chance to form and express their own opinions.

26 Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*, p. 543 f.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 543. Compare: Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*, *op. cit.*

28 Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", p. 539.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 543.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 543 f.

31 Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*. Compare: Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, Princeton University Press, 2010.

According to Honneth, the broadening and institutionalisation of rights within welfare states has led to a high degree of feasibility and reproducibility of the model itself. This reflects the fact that as the recognition of citizens' rights progressed (and was reaffirmed through elections), "a general principle of equality [emerged]" which was helpful in countering "the pre-political, economic inequalities".³² As Honneth puts it, "rights (...) provide one with a legitimate way of making clear to oneself that one is respected by everyone else".³³ Knowing that other citizens recognise 'you' as a citizen, gives you a basis for experiencing self-respect.³⁴ He continues: "What gives rights the power to enable the development of self-respect is the public character that rights possess in virtue of their empowering the bearer to engage in action that can be perceived by interaction partners".³⁵ On this basis, Honneth optimistically sees a reinforcement of the reproduction of equal citizenship: Citizens are recognised through elections and by emancipating and empowering policies; they then recognise themselves as worthy of this recognition, whereupon they become emancipated and empowered to such a degree that they perform valuable tasks. These valuable tasks can become objects of recognition by others as well as themselves. Such forms of recognition supports a sense of self-esteem which is central to recognise the valuable tasks performed by others. On this basis, ideally, citizens come to recognise the importance of general policies of emancipation and empowerment.³⁶

Honneth insists, however, on giving this circle of optimism an abstract form based on his specific understanding of human freedom as *autonomy* and on his emphasis on an intimate link between autonomy and *moral accountability*. Honneth imagines that once "adult subjects acquire, via the experience of legal recognition, the possibility of seeing their actions as the universally respected expression of their autonomy", they can form an identity as members of a

32 David Miller, "Democracy and Social Justice", *op. cit.*, p. 15; Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–116. As Miller puts it, whereas, clearly: "[i]n wealth, prestige, etc., individuals are visibly unequal (...) political equality allows each person to consider that he is as worthy and important as every other member of the community". Hence, the political sphere may help "to offset the inequalities of economic and social life". See: David Miller, "Democracy and Social Justice", in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1978, pp. 1–19, p. 17.

33 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

34 Compare: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 440–452.

35 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*

36 Compare: Axel Honneth, *Ibid.*, pp. 118–120.

moral community.³⁷ The abstract nature of this form of recognition (of oneself as chooser of moral ends) seems to weaken the empirical link between specific welfare institutions and the social identities of citizens. The abstract turn of the circle introduces a tension between the recognition of citizens' social needs and the recognition of citizens' cognitive status as choosers of moral ends. It may thus also weaken our own optimism concerning Honneth's circle.

On this point, we will be able to find grounds for internal discussion among Honneth and the civic equality social democrats. For Miller, the existence of a community requires a number of "practices or institutions that convey a sense of what it means to belong".³⁸ In later works, Miller reaffirms the need for shared institutional experiences in and through what he calls 'expressive institutions'.³⁹ 'Expressive' institutions (i.e., institutions *expressing* ideals inherent to the welfare state) are also concrete and 'impressive' (i.e., making an impression on citizens). To Miller, state institutions can promote a sense of unity among citizens by evoking "the symbolic or declarative significance of creating and maintaining a welfare state".⁴⁰ In accordance with the dual meaning of autonomy as independent and effective political voice, citizens have more than one chance of becoming aware that the "equal right to participate in government has become an essential expression of the basic equality between the members of each state".⁴¹

Such expressive institutions offer citizens a concrete experience of sharing "a common fate" by bringing them together and by offering them "the experience of receiving goods and services in common".⁴² If "everyone (...) take[s] part in the same institutional distribution of goods and services", the goods provide areas of social life in which citizens are equals. Certain institutions are obvious candidates for this task.⁴³

By attending common schools and using public hospitals, people are brought directly into contact with fellow citizens from different classes, different ethnic backgrounds, etc., and this breaks down barriers and

37 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

38 David Miller, "What's Left of the Welfare State?", in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2003, pp. 92–112, p. 99.

39 David Miller, *Ibid.*, p. 99.

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

prejudices and gives people a sense that they are sharing a common fate with others in their society.⁴⁴

The effect of common institutions or a *shared lifeworld* is a central theme among 'civic equality social democrats'.⁴⁵ Here, however, it is not so easy to adjust Honneth's theory to make him fit the social-equality model's programs. The explanation for this gap shall be explicated in the following section.

3.1 *Honneth's Recourse to a 'Prepolitical' Sphere*

The 'civic equality social democrats' and Honneth agree that central institutions of the welfare state are expressions of a shared commitment to the rights of citizens to have the preconditions for equal citizenships both in the sense (1) of having an equal opportunity to find their own political voice and (2) in the sense of being able to voice their political interests effectively. The civic equality social democrats also believe that the institutions of the welfare state have come a long way in solving the problem of reproducing citizens' commitment to the ideal of equal citizenship. Nevertheless, we found that Miller believed that a set of central welfare state institutions would have to be *common* in the sense of being commonly shared across social stratifications. Here I will show that whereas Miller argued for the need for *concrete socially common expressive institutions*, Honneth proposes the *prepolitical work-sphere* as the central solidarity-forming institution.⁴⁶ Miller's civic equality model thus differs from Honneth's theory in its distinction between different spheres of recognition

44 *Ibid.*

45 Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*, *op. cit.*; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, *op. cit.*; David Miller: *On Nationality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; Michael Walzer's "What does it mean to be an 'American' " has been used to point in a different direction. See: Michael Walzer, "What does it mean to be an 'American' ", in *Social Research*, Vol. 71, No. 3, 2004, pp. 633–654; Andrew Mason, "Political Community, Liberal-Nationalism, and the Ethics of Assimilation", in *Ethics*, Vol. 109, No. 2, 1999, pp. 261–286. Alternative models can be found to the question of how motivational challenges to welfare states can foster a proper set of identities. See: Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice*, *op. cit.* This can then go in the direction of a national identity, a culturally embedded political identity or towards a more abstract form of identifying more directly with one's status as person. These disputed debates are related to equally disputed terms such as 'trust', 'solidarity', and 'cohesion'. David Miller, *On Nationality*, *op. cit.*; Cecile Laborde, "From Constitutional to Civic Patriotism", *op. cit.*

46 To Honneth, solidarity is not about being moved to defend the institutional support of needy co-citizens, which might be the implication of Miller's model. Rather, it is the willingness to take part in the system of labour Christoph Menke and Juliane Rebentisch (ed.), *Axel Honneth: Gerechtigkeit und Gesellschaft*, Berlin: BWV, 2008.

and in its distribution of burdens between family and state. These (possibly empirically-based) differences between Pettit, Miller and Honneth are also grounded in theoretical moral psychological differences.⁴⁷ For Miller, citizens' political approaches to central welfare state institutions change if these institutions are seen to be not merely instrumental (such as forming equal democratic citizens) but are seen to have this instrumental potential only in so far as they can express and entail intrinsic value to citizens as well. For Pettit, these institutions have a primarily instrumental (emancipatory and empowering) role.⁴⁸ For Miller, in contrast, the educational and health-providing institutions provide "each citizen with certain goods—most notably health care and education—on an equal basis", but they do so by way of giving citizens a sense of *shared fate*.⁴⁹

Honneth would willingly agree that the cognitively demanding abstract story of the self-respect provided by legal recognition needs to be supplemented by a highly demanding sense of equal citizenship. When he takes up this question, however, he formulates an answer very different from Miller's.⁵⁰ Honneth argues that the motivations necessary for the reproduction of relations of equal citizenship can be provided by 'pre-political' institutions (rather than health care and school). Therefore, there is no need, as Miller would have it, to defend the need for common rather than segregated hospitals or schools as a condition of solidarity. As the exposition of Honneth's theory below will show, if Miller is right, the reproduction of a citizenry who by virtue of their solidarity support the core ideal of the welfare state may be threatened by Honneth's model.

According to the exposition in the part above, Honneth believes that the sustained motivation of citizens to promote the institutions that support the

47 This is already indicated by the distinction drawn between the Danish and the German school system on the question of mixed schools.

48 To Pettit, status inequality should not be seen to stem from a flaw in the 'natural goodness of humanity', but rests on the contingent fact that 'people are not equally respect-able'. See: Joshua Cohen, *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*, p. 539. Furthermore, Pettit states: "People may be equally respect-able in the higher-order sense that they each have the capacity to perform in a manner, and with an effect, which is as worthy of respect as anyone else's performance. But they are not equally respect-able in the sense of actually performing to that standard or with such an effect". See: *Ibid.*, p. 542. Comparing the norm of equality against the fact of unequal respectability, however, reveals that it is the facts rather than the norm that needs to change.

49 David Miller, "What's Left of the Welfare State?", *op. cit.*, p. 98.

50 In Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*; Honneth 2011, *op. cit.*

empowerment of citizens' individualised- and empowered political voice depends on their *reflective* insight that their own autonomy depends on such social and political institutions which are promoted by other citizens. Thus, citizens need to see that their private ends can be achieved only through some form of social cooperation with others (what Honneth in *Das Recht der Freiheit* calls 'social freedom').⁵¹

Apart from this self-reflective process, Honneth provides an additional narrative of how citizens may come to perceive political processes as non-antagonistic.⁵² According to Honneth, Dewey was right. The sense that non-strategic, non-egoistic approaches to politics are rational to me as an individual can be where and when citizens form "a consciousness of cooperatively contributing with all others to the realization of common goals".⁵³ For Honneth, however, Dewey's conclusion sets Honneth apart from Miller. This motivation to enter politics as a co-operator rather than a bearer of egoistic preferences is formed primarily within "prepolitical associational communities—especially those connected with the world of work—within which individuals develop a sense of solidarity and an interest in solving collective social problems for the development and encouragement of participatory motivations".⁵⁴ It is in the prepolitical realm rather than 'within' public institutions that citizens come to see themselves as sharing problems with other citizens; problems which may best be solved—if solvable at all—through cooperation.

As citizens expend their energy in their work, they are likely to realise that their particular work is functionally linked to the work contributions and competences of other citizens. They will realise that this link between diverse groups "increase the reasonability and rationality of solutions through enriching the context of deliberations".⁵⁵ This insight, according to Honneth, is in itself central to the formation of a democratic identity of this cooperating kind. We come to see ourselves as beings whose broader interests can only be satisfied in complex forms of cooperation. Through such cooperation, we come to realise that mutual cooperation with others within society in general

51 See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011.

52 Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*; Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*

53 Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*, p. 776.

54 Christopher F. Zurn, "Recognition, Redistribution, and Democracy: Dilemmas of Honneth's Critical Social Theory", in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2005, pp. 89–126, p. 95 f.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

can be personally rewarding without being reducible to immediate, self-interested cost-benefit calculations. Thus, citizens are likely to accept that interaction with other citizens in the political sphere is distinguishable from self-interested strategic rationality in any crude sense.

According to Honneth, Dewey shows us how such forms of pre-political cooperative interaction within the sphere of work teaches us to overcome political problems through cooperative democratic means.⁵⁶ In the sphere of work, citizens form the democratic virtues and mind-set that motivates them to participate in the democratic public as members of a cooperating (rather than preference aggregating) political community of equal citizens. Only through citizens' experiences in work relations can a welfare state "motivate individuals to participate in broader socio-political decision making, beyond the confines of familial, affinity, and career groups";⁵⁷ and only then will they participate in a non-selfish manner.⁵⁸ This emphasis on the importance of pre-political institutions for democratic citizenship differs from Miller's emphasis on public (state) institutions of shared fate in so far as it foregrounds civil society and the market sphere as the impetus for citizenship.⁵⁹

3.2 *An Alternative to Honneth's Prepolitical Sphere: The School*

Honneth's emphasis on the sphere of work as formative of democratic sensibilities is complex and critical.⁶⁰ It is also problematic when viewed in light of the Scandinavian welfare states. In Scandinavia, the workplace may not act as integrative or formative for all citizens. Many Scandinavians enter the work force relatively late in life, after prolonged education. Some will never enter a

56 See: David Owen, "Self-Government and Democracy as Reflexive Co-operation: Reflections on Honneth's Social and Political Ideal", in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds.), *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 295 f. Compare: Christopher F. Zurn, "Recognition, Redistribution, and Democracy, *op. cit.*, pp. 94 f.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Compare: David Miller, *On Nationality*, *op. cit.*; David Miller, "In what Sense must Socialism be Communitarian?", *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1989, pp. 51–73.

59 Thereby moving in the direction of the welfare-state-sceptical, civil-society-optimistic, critical-theory tradition represented by Iris Marion Young. See: Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, 1990.

60 See: Axel Honneth "Work and Instrumental Action", in *The Fragmented World of the Social: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995; Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*; Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*, *op. cit.*; Axel Honneth, "Recognition as Ideology", in Bert van den Brink and David Owen, *op. cit.*, pp. 323–347.

sphere of cooperative work (since they are continuously unemployed or working as individuals, sub-contractors, free-lancers, *etc.*). If they do enter what Honneth and Dewey would define as cooperative work-relations their working conditions may not have the democracy-empowering, emancipatory and solidarity-promoting qualities that the model aspires. In this context, it is the lower secondary school that plays the role of forming the democratic citizen. In highlighting the school, the Scandinavian welfare state tradition and Dewey are on common ground.

Given the complex forms of labour promoted within the Scandinavian welfare states and the later age at which most Scandinavian citizens enter the sphere of work (as qualified workers), most citizens will enter the work force well after they have achieved political voting rights. How are 18-year-old (or even younger) citizens to show democratic cooperative competences if their democratic learning process does not begin until they start working, i.e., in their mid-20s or even at 30? This is the obvious reason why most democratic countries have some agenda for fostering democratic and civic virtues through schools at an early age.⁶¹ This point comes to mind once we consider Miller's point about the *expressive* and *'impressive'* relations at schools, Dewey's concern with democratic education at schools and the fact that in Scandinavian welfare states, public secondary schools have been seen as laboratories for building democratic practice and instilling democratic culture. Hence, it is in Scandinavia that the Deweyian 'project work' and focus cooperative problem-solving has been extraordinarily prominent.

Numerous elements of the Dewey-Honneth model could therefore be 'lifted' from the prepolitical sphere of work relations into the politicised and welfare *state* institutionalised lower-secondary school arena. After all, it is not hard to adopt Deweyan ideas within this arena. As Dewey points out in the beginning of *Democracy and Education*, education is a communal *need*.⁶² Without education of the youth, fundamental experiences of knowledge of how to survive and express oneself as a human being would be lost.⁶³

61 Honneth's interest in such questions is shown in chapter 1 in this volume.

62 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2007/1916, pp. 10–12.

63 Many schoolchildren would object to any thoughts of schooling as an urge! The point being, rather, that the social need for education can be made vivid as a self-interest of children; particularly if it connects teaching to problem-solving and experiencing.

3.3 *Mediated Recognition in the Common Lower-Secondary School*

Combining (1) Honneth's focus on horizontal recognition, (2) Miller's emphasis on expressive institutions and (3) the empirical insight that public workers within central welfare state institutions such as the common lower secondary school can establish effective vertical forms of recognition, we can now elaborate the possible strategic uses of public welfare institutions to promote and reproduce equal citizenship and civic equality. For Honneth, the common public lower secondary school is a central player in the strategies of enabling the emancipation and empowerment of citizens. Within *common* schools—'common' in Miller's sense—a sense of solidarity may be fostered which will help the reproduction of the welfare state.⁶⁴ However, as many commentators have observed, the mere blending of social groups may not be enough to foster solidarity.⁶⁵

Beyond this blending of children from different social classes, the impact of the teacher as a public worker within the welfare state also needs to be highlighted. The explicit recognition by public employees of children's equal status may be very effective in a society where the status of children differs substantially. For these future citizens, teachers may offer visible expressions of what equality of status means and which role it is meant to play within the welfare state.⁶⁶ I believe this suggested model could gain strength by implementing

64 See for example: Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education: With a New Preface and Epilogue*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press (2nd ed.), 1999/1987; Melissa S. Williams, "Citizenship as Identity, Citizenship as Shared Fate, and the Functions of Multicultural Education", in Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (eds.), *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies: Teaching for Cosmopolitan Values and Collective Identities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 208–248; Meira Levinson, "Common Schools and Multicultural Education", in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2007, pp. 625–642.

65 See: Meira Levinson, *op. cit.*; Amy Gutmann, *op. cit.*

66 For empirical evidence see the discussion of Gardon Allports 'contact hypothesis': "Allport argued that four conditions were required for intergroup interaction to reduce prejudice: contact must (1) be frequent enough to lead to personal acquaintance, (2) be cooperative, in pursuit of shared goals, (3) be supported by institutional authorities, and (4) take place among participants of equal status (equal roles within the organization)". See: Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 123 ff.

See also: Pathen Markell, "Making Affect Safe for Democracy? On Constitutional Patriotism", in *Political Theory*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2000, pp. 38–63; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996/1992; Cecile Laborde, "From Constitutional to Civic Patriotism", *op. cit.* In this new light, we may now give real meaning to a point made by John Dewey

aspects of Honneth's theory of recognition. However, in this area Honneth's model is in need of correction. In Honneth's work-based model, experiences of cooperative problem solving takes place within workplace-based environments, among citizens who share a particular set of competences which sets them off from other citizens. In contrast, cooperative practices within schools have the possibility to become a more *inclusive* practice than specialised functionally differentiated labour. Within schools, future citizens could experience the kind of sharing of fate expressed by Miller's social democratic model. Moving the model to the lower-secondary common school, cooperative practices and problem-solving projects in a 'truly' common school (given Miller's standard of social inclusiveness) could make the model work as a foundational model for the formation of citizens motivated towards democratic civility.⁶⁷ Instead of state coordinated spheres of work, these citizens would now be acting within the framework of state run welfare institutions. Hence, citizens who may later become unemployed or choose to work as independent workers would be able to share in the foundational citizenship formation that would make them believe in their equal standing as citizens.

4 Problems of Honneth's Systematics

I have suggested that for the reproduction of welfare states working to realise the ideal of equal citizenship, common institutions need to be installed and reproduced. In such common institutions, citizens form a sense of shared fate.⁶⁸ Here, public workers can offer an alternative to the inequalities of status present within civil society. This model depends on whether a sufficient number of citizens (teachers) take upon themselves the task of articulating specific normatively defined sets of 'recognitional attitudes'. The model depends also on whether these attitudes will continue to find political and institutional support. Political and institutional support relies on more than preambles to public school legislations (as can be found in Scandinavia). It depends on how

and referred to by Axel Honneth: "State institutions, whose officials are 'officers of the public' have to enable, as Dewey puts it, all members of society 'to count with reasonable certainty upon what others will do'; they create 'respect for others and for one's self' ". See: Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*, p. 775.

67 See the debate in Meira Levinson, "Common Schools and Multicultural Education", *op. cit.*

68 This point is inspired by Melissa S. William. See: Melissa S. William, "Citizenship as Identity, Citizenship as Shared Fate, and the Functions of Multicultural Education", *op. cit.*

school quality and outputs are measured, on the internally expressed visions of the good teacher and on public opinions concerning the purpose of the school.

Such publicly promoted recognitional attitudes do not seem to play a role in Honneth's work. In contrast to his own self-understanding as a theorist whose work is closely aligned with the Scandinavian type welfare state, Honneth's recent work seems closely aligned with a continental welfare state model stressing the impact of families rather than schools.⁶⁹ Perhaps we can explain why such attitudes might be absent from Honneth's theory.

The forms of public social work described above are expressions of what I would term 'mediated' forms of recognition. Mediated recognition forms are partly professional and partly personal. In contrast to the recognition of legal rights, such as those expressed in a constitution or executed by monetary transfers of socio-economic goods, mediated forms of recognition are linked to the initial form of recognition found in relations such as love or esteem, where individuals are compelled to express their recognition of another human being by their preferences for particular individuals. On the other hand, they are also distinct from such forms of recognition by being stabilised by professional habits (such as a professional-ethical codex, a work-ethos, salaries, institutional control, etc.). This mediated recognition also differs from the anonymous face of the public or mass of political representatives who might generally express their support for welfare state institutions. It consists of a concrete human's interaction with another human.

The introduction of mediated forms of recognition is thus an extension of Honneth's initial scheme. It poses a conceptual threat to Honneth's 'three part sphere systematics', which forms the core of *The Struggle for Recognition* as well as Honneth's general theory of recognition developed in his subsequent works.

For Honneth, 'legal' recognition dominates a restricted area distinguished from the spheres of particular attachments and "[c]ompared to the form of recognition found in love (...) legal relations differ in just about every essential respect".⁷⁰ For Honneth, legal recognition is purely cognitive. It involves

69 I base this on the fact that in Axel Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit* the family rather than traditional welfare state institutions such as schools and elderly homes, hospitals and pre-school institutions such as kindergarten and nurseries marks the sphere with primarily responsibility of the welfare of citizens. This suggests a Continental rather than a Scandinavian welfare type. See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011. See, however: Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and, Paul Sörensen, *op. cit.*

70 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107 f.

no affective component, no emotional feeling of attachment, community, or shared identity. Legal recognition is thus totally distinct from the kind of recognition found in relations of love, family, friendship or other forms of sentiment-based relations.⁷¹ As he puts it, “this type of universal respect is not to be conceived of as an affective attitude but rather only as a purely cognitive accomplishment of comprehension, which sets almost internal limits on emotional promptings”.⁷² Honneth thus stresses the cognitive side of this form of recognition, which should “be detached from feelings of liking”.⁷³

The teacher and public school model, however, indicates, first, that the reproduction of the welfare state depends on a group of citizens who are willing to show a group of citizens’ affective or ‘thick’ expressive recognition and, second, that we need *only* a group of citizens—not all citizens—to do so. This group of citizens (depending on how well civil society is able to support the ideal) are the public workers, employed by the state to conduct tasks necessary for the welfare state’s reproduction of equal citizens.⁷⁴ They are, to use Honneth’s terminology, performing ‘legal respect’, but their ‘respect’ cannot fully be detached from feelings of liking and affection, as Honneth describes them. I am not claiming that all teachers are to be emotionally attached to all future citizens, merely that a realistic model will depend less on purely cognitive respect and more on a plurality of teachers able to express different types of attachments and engagements of a both cognitive and emotional nature.

So far, I have indicated that Honneth commits himself to a clear distinction between legal and affective relations on the grounds of systematic concerns (grounded in his intension to formulate a theory of three distinct spheres and forms of recognition). As I shall show in the following, however, Honneth’s commitment to this distinction is closely linked to his understanding of the relations of respect in the second (legal) sphere of recognition. For Honneth, “the legal system can be understood as the expression of the universalisable interest of all members of society”.⁷⁵ For him, these interests are limited by three principles. First, for Honneth, legal relations rest on a fundamental logic of *reciprocity*. Discussing ‘the logic’ of legal relations, he argues that they “appeal to the same mechanism of reciprocal recognition”. Hence, “we can only come

71 *Ibid.*, pp. 107–110.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

73 *Ibid.*

74 See: Michael Walzer, “The Civil Society Argument”, in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Citizenship*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995.

75 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

to understand ourselves as the bearer of rights when we know, in turn, what various normative obligations we must keep vis-à-vis others".⁷⁶ Secondly, rights are made effective through laws. For laws to earn legitimacy they need citizens' *consent* and 'free approval'.⁷⁷ A third principle establishes an empirical link to the limited universalisable recognitional attitudes of citizens. According to Honneth, citizens will not offer strangers affective forms of recognition. They can only be expected to recognise in all other citizens a 'capacity' consisting of 'a purely cognitive accomplishment of comprehension'.^{78,79}

Honneth expands these three principles of legal structures to the legitimacy of legally-based state institutions as forms of vertical recognition. For Honneth, citizens cannot be required to show emotionally grounded recognition to strangers. We are expected to give emotionally grounded recognition only to those with whom we have affective relations (family and friends). Emotions have a voluntary element and cannot be demanded. In the sphere of esteem, the cognitively and emotionally mixed basis of our recognition contains a voluntary root. For Honneth, the empirical fact of limited recognition together with the rule of reciprocity and free consent imposes limits on what he calls legal relations even in its institutional form.

What about a group of citizens who freely choose to perform a public task and freely choose to submit themselves to a specific (but pluralistic) professional *ethos*? The presence of such a group challenges Honneth's claim that legal recognition is limited by the empirical limits set by people's willingness to recognise all others as well as by the principles of reciprocity and consent. Teachers, namely, consent to enter relations that are grounded in the ideals of equal respect. However, the relations of recognition into which they enter—relations with their pupils—are not directly reciprocal (as required by Honneth's theory). We may call them 'delayed reciprocal' in the sense that schoolchildren are offered recognition in the form of an expectation which they will only be fully competent to reciprocate later in life. Since children are often unable to reciprocate, it is only by recourse to forms of recognition known from the intimate relations of parents and children that we can understand

76 *Ibid.*, p. 108. The existence of laws and the expression of commitment of following laws express a commitment to all citizens "as persons capable of autonomously making reasonable decisions about moral norms" whereas they are bound only by laws which "they have, in principle, been able to agree to the norms as free and equal beings". See: *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 111.

77 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

the prescriptive and expressive nature of the recognition given. Only with recourse to the esteem teachers may expect for their socially useful work can we fully understand the motivation of teachers who are not being rewarded in the way parents are rewarded by their ongoing efforts to express recognition. There is thus a part of the legal sphere which is not directly reciprocal, and where elements of love, respect and esteem—to use Honneth's terminology—play a part. Honneth, in contrast, insists on differentiating such recognitional attitudes into different spheres of the family, the legal sphere and civil society.

In contrast to Honneth's sphere-systematic-argument, the concept of mediated forms of recognition shows that vertical recognition does not need to be motivationally limited to the kind of recognition in which all citizens would be willing to give all citizens. By introducing functionally differentiated public work, we do not violate the fundamental principle of *reciprocity* upon which Honneth relies.

Within the expanded legal sphere of recognition, teachers, pedagogues, and welfare workers can choose a profession where they are expected to give an affectively more demanding kind of recognition than within the legal recognition structures suggested by Honneth. They give this recognition in their engagement with needy 'strangers' with whom they come to form short-term or long-term relationships. Such welfare work—if the state seeks to structure, provide the means for it as well as appreciate it—can be personally rewarding, be well-paid and lead to esteem from other citizens. Given the plurality of human interests, Honneth is right that we cannot expect that all citizens would be willing to give all others such a demanding form of affective recognition based partly on the needs of others. However, we can expect that there are at least some who will find such forms of work and recognition meaningful and rewarding.

A large group of publicly employed citizens could be legitimately expected to offer strangers' children a form of affective recognition not merely on account of their good hearted nature, but because the recognition they offer is effective—or 'impressive'—in its articulating the ideal of equal citizenship. Thus, they may come to see that due to the professional efforts, children who were unable to fully express or even comprehend the ideal of equal citizenship could gradually come to understand and live out this ideal. In this sense, the recognition offered by a public employee (the teacher) is not necessarily compelled by the actions of the other (the child), but by a cognitive and experience-based belief in the effect of expressing recognition (in order to help the future citizen imagine him or herself as being worthy of the recognition). In this sense, Honneth's theory of recognition may help reveal a model for citizen

formation historically inherent to Scandinavian welfare institutions, but now slowly eroding (due to New Public Management and political valorising of the economic demands of the market). To see this potential, however, his model needs to include a subversion of legal recognition. It does not make sense to see the form of recognition discussed above as clearly distinct from affective recognition. Its very form needs to be combined with affective forms of recognition, and for the particular teacher, the motivational root of actual forms of recognition is likely to be motivated in combination (though not always) with affective concerns for particular children.

This picture suggests that the welfare state can only reproduce itself if it insists on breaking down the systematic dichotomy introduced by Honneth. Scandinavian welfare states can only reproduce the intrinsic ideal of equal citizenship by providing relations of recognition via public workers. This kind of recognition challenges Honneth's systematics. These relations are instrumental for ensuring the on-going provision of precisely those public goods and values that stabilise and reproduce the intrinsic ideal of equal citizenship inherent to the social democratic position and which can realise Honneth's project.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I first turned to comparative and normative approaches that took the normative core of Scandinavian welfare states to be the ideal of equal citizenship and civic equality. I found that Axel Honneth's theory of recognition was very much in line with this 'thick' normative ideal of equal citizenship involving recognitional attitudes of civic equality. I followed Honneth's expansion of the ideal of equal citizenship into an emancipatory, an empowering as well as voice-giving dimension.

Next, I analysed Honneth's theory from the perspective of the 'thinner' normative ideals of reproducibility, showing how Honneth's theory of the reproduction of the non-selfish citizen, who shares a strong commitment to the equal status of citizens, depends both on citizens' ability to reflect on their recognised rights, and on their experiences within pre-political spheres of differentiated labour. I have argued that though the Scandinavian welfare states—or social democracies—realise something close to Honneth's theory, they do so in a manner which cannot be understood if one views the model through the lenses of Honneth's distinct sphere structure. Furthermore, Scandinavian welfare states realise something close to his model by ways which are partly

opposed to Honneth's worksphere strategy. My suggested solution aligns recognition theory with the Scandinavian welfare state tradition of common schools and public employees. However, this leads to a partial break up of Honneth's central systematic strategy in *The Struggle for Recognition*. The discussion of Honneth's work has nevertheless helped bring out the rationale for continuing support for such forms of 'mediated recognition'. This investigation has provided the framework for a normative reconstruction of the Scandinavian welfare states with the possibility for further critical analysis of developments within these societies—such as the possible erosion of common schools and the gradual decline of the 'thick' normative tasks of public employees.

Recognition, Solidarity, and the Politics of Esteem

Basic Income as a Test Case

Arto Laitinen

The Nordic welfare states have arguably been successful in terms of social solidarity—although the heavily institutional and state-driven solutions as opposed to community- or family-based ones in various issues from child to elderly care may have made it seem as mere ‘quasi-solidarity’ in comparison to more communitarian ideals.¹ This essay approaches such social solidarity in terms of Axel Honneth’s recognition-theoretical framework—arguing that there is much more potential in Honnethian ideas of recognition and esteem than in Honneth’s official view linking social solidarity only to social esteem based on contributions to the shared good.²

The first section briefly introduces Honneth’s three forms of recognition and also distinguishes social solidarity from other relevant notions of solidarity. It points out that there is far from perfect overlap between the ideas of social solidarity and social esteem. Of the three main forms of Honnethian recognition, one can link the notion of social solidarity to respect and care as well, and not merely to esteem. In the final section these forms of mutual recognition will be discussed in the context of justifying basic income which

* I wish to thank participants in the opening meeting of the research project “Pathologies of Recognition” in Jyväskylä in September 2012, in the Nordic Summer University (NSU) meeting in Turku 2012, as well as in the Philosophy and Social Science meeting in Prague in 2009. Parts of the chapter draw from my “Social Bases of Self-Esteem: Rawls, Honneth, and Beyond”, in *Nordicum-Mediterraneum*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2012. I would also like to thank Odin Lysaker and Jonas Jakobsen, as well as Arvi Särkelä, Petteri Niemi, Heikki Ikäheimo, and other members of the research project “Pathologies of Recognition”, for comments.

- 1 Kurt Bayertz, “Four Uses of ‘Solidarity’” in Bayertz (ed.), *Solidarity*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999, pp. 3–28. Nordic welfare states have in their heyday also been successful as egalitarian societies. Whether they have also ranked highly in terms of freedom, even Honneth’s Hegelian ‘social freedom’, is more disputable. See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Suhrkamp: Berlin, 2011.
- 2 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995; Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003; Axel Honneth, *Disrespect*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007; Axel Honneth, *The I in We*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.

arguably institutionalises high solidarity, yet is *prima facie* more straightforward to justify in terms of respect or care than in terms of esteem. The reason is that esteem is supposed to be conditional on differential merits, capacities, contributions, or achievements whereas basic income is supposed to be unconditional. Furthermore, section two points out that there may be varieties of esteem and some of such varieties of ‘politics of esteem’ may not be that centrally related to social solidarity. It distinguishes between three contexts of social esteem. One is related to the minimum standing as free from *discrimination* in terms of disesteem, another is related to one’s being a *contributor* to the shared social ends in some publicly defined role, and the third is related to excellence in one’s personal projects of *self-realisation*.

The third section articulates some challenges to any kind of ‘politics of esteem’: how to decide whether something is or is not esteem? How would a good society respond to these kinds of cases—especially ones compatible with the modern universalistic ethos? What to think of the positive duties and permissions to engage in the ‘esteem services’ of actually forming opinions and giving recognition? And finally, how to see the relation between social esteem and social solidarity?

The sections four to six then go through the three kinds of cases (non-discrimination, contributions, and self-realisation), answering the four questions: is this really a kind of esteem? Is it compatible with the ethos of universalism? How to distribute the related duties and permissions? How is it related to social solidarity? These sections map the ethical and political consequences of the claim that full human agency is dependent on positive relations to self, including self-esteem, and that these relations are deeply dependent on the recognition from other individuals and institutions such as the state. The basic Honnethian idea is that a good society is sensitive to the dynamics of self-relations and recognition. For example, the invisible housework by women should get due recognition, and welfare services should not be delivered in a stigmatising or demeaning fashion, as stigmatising practices may lead to an internalised sense of inferiority and low self-esteem. Section seven finally takes up the question of basic income in light of the various forms of recognition and esteem, to be followed by a brief conclusion.

1 Kinds of Recognition and Aspects of Social Solidarity

1.1 *Three Kinds of Recognition*

In *Struggle for Recognition* Axel Honneth distinguishes between three main forms of mutual recognition. One is universal respect which is unconditional

on merits, desert, or other particularities, and another is that of love or care which is also unconditional on merits, desert, or other particularities, but is not universal either, as it concerns persons as irreplaceable individuals. The third form is esteem which is conditional on merits, desert, or other particularities. These three forms of social relations (respect, love, and esteem) correspond to three kinds of relations to self (self-respect, self-confidence, and self-esteem). These self-relations concern oneself as an autonomous agent who is equal amongst others (self-respect), or as a singular being whose needs matter and who needs to be loved (self-confidence), and as a bearer of abilities or traits that others can value (self-esteem).³ The key difference between esteem and other forms of recognition is that it is based on various particularities, various qualitative differences between people, that make them more or less esteem-worthy.

1.2 *Organic Solidarity and the Social Division of Labour*

Honneth (since *Recognition or Redistribution*) links the notion of solidarity especially to one of the three main interpersonal relations, namely to social esteem. The main idea is that of Durkheimian ‘organic solidarity’: in modern societies characterised by division of labour, everyone has a standing as someone who contributes to the shared societal good—and these contributions serve as the basis of social esteem; everyone who contributes is thereby worthy of social esteem.⁴ As opposed to the traditional ‘mechanic solidarity’, this kind of organic solidarity unites people who make different kinds of contributions, thanks to the division of labour. The closer to full employment, or to full inclusion in socially productive or reproductive roles a society gets, the more inclusive such solidarity across differences in roles is.

One may wonder whether a new kind of solidarity is needed in late industrial societies, to replace ‘organic solidarity’ which was more at home in an industrial modern societies, and which replaced mechanistic solidarity which was in turn at home in pre-modern societies. Challenges to organic solidarity are of different types: global injustice calls for global solidarity; the structural transformation of work from ‘factories’ to ‘studios’ may call for rethinking the relationship between work and free time; the precarious situation of the labour force within contemporary mature capitalism may call for basic income less dependent on actual contributions; ecological and technological

3 For further analysis, see: Arto Laitinen, “Interpersonal Recognition: A Response to Value or a Precondition of Personhood?”, *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2002, pp. 463–478.

4 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, New York: Free Press, 1947/1893.

developments suggest that less work overall will be needed, and so on. These are challenges to the aims and institutions of welfare societies, as well as challenges to theoreticians. The last section of this article will say something about basic income, which can be seen as one possible development in late modern solidarity, equating social membership to a lesser extent with contributions via work. Its relationship to esteem is less straightforward than that of Durkheimian organic solidarity.

1.3 *Solidarities: Human, Social, and Political*

The Durkheimian mechanic and organic solidarity, as well as any contemporary proposals that seek to replace them, are forms of what can be called ‘social solidarity’, covering the civil and civic aspects of our membership in the ‘normal’ phases of society. It covers the aspects of social integration, bonding, and social ties characterised by feelings of belonging, readiness to support, normative commitments and identifications with, rather than brute force or economic imperatives. Social solidarity in this sense can be distinguished from more inclusive moral or human or global solidarity on the one hand, and more revolutionary or agonistic ‘political solidarity’ on the other.⁵ Political solidarity focuses more on political attempts to bring about social change, to more or less ‘revolutionary’ movements and phases (from unions in strikes, and demonstrators, to barricades) of a society. It can be noted that Honneth’s analysis of *struggles* for recognition applies to political solidarity in that sense, as an account of critical social movements and the motivational bases of such movements. Instead of political solidarity, it is clearly social solidarity that Honneth has in mind when he links social esteem to solidarity.

The idea of ‘universal moral solidarity’ or ‘human solidarity’, to the extent that it makes sense at all (and I would argue that it does), relates to the whole moral community of all moral agents, whether or not members of the same society. It is an important advance in the “modern social imaginaries” (Charles Taylor) that we see issues of membership as layered—whether or not we are participants in the same democratic state as full citizens, or in the same public sphere as discussants, or in the same economy as workers, employers,

5 See: Bayertz, *Solidarity*, *op. cit.*; Sally Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2008; Andreas Wildt “Solidarität”, in Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995; Max Pensky, “Social Solidarity and Intersubjective Recognition: Axel Honneth’s Struggle for Recognition”, in Danielle Petherbridge (ed.), *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays with a Reply by Axel Honneth*, Boston: Brill, 2011, pp 125–154; Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community*, Boston: MIT Press, 2005.

consumers, exchangers, or in the same society as ‘social citizens’ or peers, we all are members of the ideal moral community. In principle there can be global forms of social solidarity (if there is a global society) or political solidarity (if the whole humankind forms a political movement to fight, say, climate change), but currently these are best characterised as cross-national (crossing the boundaries of societies) rather than inclusively global. By contrast, moral or human solidarity aims by definition to all-inclusiveness. This article, to repeat, focuses on social solidarity, but Honnethian ideals of respect and also care can in principle be extended to be forms of global moral regard.

1.4 *Social Solidarity and Mutual Recognition*

The idea that it is precisely one of the three kinds of recognition that is most relevant for social solidarity can be resisted, and indeed many authors have pursued different paths. For some, such as Richard Rorty, solidarity covers all positive relations to others in a rather undifferentiated manner, although Rorty’s take arguably stresses care and sympathy over respect and esteem.⁶ For the likes of Jürgen Habermas, solidarity is one of two fundamental aspects of mutual recognition, the flipside of universalistic justice.⁷ Mutual respect, especially moral respect, is a matter of justice, whereas solidarity is in an undifferentiated manner a matter of what Honneth wants to distinguish as esteem and love. Habermas’ approach seems more developed than Rorty’s, and it makes a couple of vital points: in all particular relationships, the layer of mutual moral respect constitutes the moral core. In the particular lifeworlds and the ethical identifications that come with them, both issues of merit (esteem-worthiness) and special concern (love) are present—so social solidarity can be seen as having both those elements.

David Miller, like Honneth, sees solidarity as one of three fundamental interpersonal relations, but strikingly couples solidarity with the needs-based concern that Honneth would call love or care.⁸ For Miller, the desert-based regard is not solidaristic, but a matter of more competitive economic exchanges and

6 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Rorty has been criticised for example for not seeing the qualitative differences there are between face-to-face sympathy, and society-wide, not to mention global solidarity. See: Pensky, *op. cit.*

7 Jürgen Habermas, “Justice and Solidarity: On the Discussion Concerning Stage 6”, *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 21, No. 12, 1989, pp. 32–52.

8 David Miller, *Principles of Social Justice*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003; Axel Honneth, “Philosophy as Social Research: David Miller’s Theory of Justice”, in *The I in We*, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–134.

relations. Although both appeal to the traditional triad of distributive principles (equality; needs; desert), each locates social solidarity only with needs or only with merits. This gives rise to three comments: First, there may be a ‘false positive’ in the claim that social solidarity always goes with esteem—a closer look at kinds of esteem may show that some forms of esteem are not as fundamentally solidarity-friendly as some others. This will be pursued in the next sections.

Second, there may be ‘false negatives’ both in Honneth’s claim that solidarity is not a matter of care, but of esteem, and in Miller’s claim that solidarity is not a matter of esteem or desert, but of care for the needy. My hunch is that both Miller’s claim that solidarity is related to needs, and Honneth’s claim that solidarity is related to esteem join forces in supporting the Habermasian level of generality which relates social solidarity both to esteem and care.⁹ So once we have analysed how solidarity goes together with esteem, we should continue the analysis of how solidarity goes together with care. Far from doing this adequately, this chapter will take a brief look at this in the context of basic income.

Thirdly, all these authors (Miller, Honneth, and Habermas) seem to contrast universalistic (especially moral) respect and social solidarity. This, too, may be a problematic case of a false negative. Just like there are many contexts of esteem, more or less solidarity-friendly, there are also many contexts of respect as free and equal, and some may be more relevant to social solidarity than others.¹⁰ While moral universalism goes with moral solidarity, socio-political universalism and equality go with social solidarity: there are aspects in which all *citizens* (of a particular political society) are to be recognised as free and equal. This goes beyond the freedom and equality of all moral subjects, including non-citizens. Democracies necessarily exclude non-members and give certain rights and obligations only to members, but nonetheless they are to regard the *members* as free and equal. Their standing as co-authors of the norms we live by, as participants of collective self-rule, as deliberators and opinionators is a significant form of social solidarity—an agentic solidarity of ‘joint projects’ rather than relational solidarity of ‘significant special relations’ of other sorts. We are in it together, it is *our* task to make this society work. ‘Fellow citizens’ is

9 Further, it may be that Miller’s example of economic exchange can best be interpreted in terms of what Michael Walzer calls ‘free exchange’ rather than desert or merit, see: Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, New York: Basic Books, 1983.

10 Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002/1996; Arto Laitinen, “Interpersonal Recognition and Responsiveness to Relevant Differences”, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2006, pp. 47–70.

a nice expression stressing this aspect. As, for example, Charles Taylor stresses in his response to the Habermasian idea of constitutional patriotism, it matters to us how *our* political project fares. This kind ‘civic’ solidarity is an aspect of social solidarity, while quite straightforwardly related to mutual respect as free and equal.¹¹ Justifications of basic income can rely both on such political autonomy and standing as free and equal, and on private autonomy in projects of self-realisation, as I hope to show in section seven.

2 Contexts of Esteem: Stigmas, Contributions, and Self-Realisation

Honneth’s discussion of social esteem and solidarity seems to include different strands: on the one hand there is a stress on being a useful contributor to the society, which in the context of full employment would amount to quite an egalitarian picture—as opposed to traditional hierarchies of status. On the other hand, there is the focus on individual traits, merits, and biographical specificity as opposed to mere roles in status hierarchies. On closer inspection, this turns out to be a quite different form of esteem. In Honneth’s confrontations with Fraser and Taylor, I think three contexts of esteem can be mapped. The *first* context is really a negative case against stereotypical stigmatising, or a case for freedom from unfounded and unjustifiable disesteem. Here, a universalist norm against second order citizenship is central (see Section 4).

The *second* case is positive esteem based on *contributions to the societal good* (or to the aims of a system of cooperation), perhaps related to a division of labour, and Durkheimian organic solidarity. In an ideal society no-one is excluded from making useful contributions to the common good. (Full employment is one version of this ideal; but a decent or an ideal society may well have structures such as basic income which make full employment an irrelevant arrangement for the goal of letting everyone contribute). In an arrangement of horizontal (non-hierarchical) complementarity everyone has a positive status or rank with role-expectations to contribute to the common good (Section 5).¹²

The *third* context concerns completely personalised, differential feedback concerning merits and achievements, in the context of individual self—realisation via projects that may or may not be related to the societal good.

11 Nicholas H. Smith and Arto Laitinen, “Taylor on Solidarity”, *Thesis Eleven*, Vol. 99, No. 1, 2009, pp. 48–70; Pensky, “Social solidarity”, *op. cit.*

12 See Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*; Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, *op. cit.*; Heikki Ikäheimo, “On the Genus and Species of Recognition”, *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2002, pp. 447–462.

(This may and often will concern the same socially useful activity as above, but now considered as a project of self-realisation). Arguably self-realisation is a deeply dialogical business, and esteem plays a role in it. This may or may not be beneficial to the common good, but the normative basis seems to be different—what matters may be either that the individual realises his or her potentials, or that he or she does something intrinsically worthwhile. (Section 6).

3 Challenges to Any Politics of Esteem

Having briefly differentiated these three kinds of phenomena, all of which are arguably related to esteem, it quickly comes apparent that they may call for different socio-political solutions and different distribution of duties and permissions, and may support different relations in terms of universalism and solidarity.

There is something in the spirit of esteem that is egalitarian: no-one should be treated as an inferior, treated in a demeaning fashion, as a second class citizen, as *a priori* incompetent in this or that manner. Everyone's contributions to the societal good should be registered. But there is a twist. Unlike basic respect or unlike concern for one's basic needs, the grammar or logic of esteem seems to be conditional on one's merits, achievements, or doing one's share or other positive particular features. Esteem has to be deserved, or grounded in one's valuable particular features, one must be worthy of esteem. Granting esteem, according to Taylor at least, is genuine and differs from mere lip-service only if it is based on genuine judgements or evaluation or grading.¹³ Especially when cultural differences are involved, such judgements may be difficult to form and take a lot of time and effort—coming to understand other cultures may take years.

This gives rise to various challenges to any politics of esteem: *First*, perhaps politics of esteem tends to lead to a wrong kind of meritocracy?¹⁴ If so, does it not inevitably serve to undermine modern egalitarianism? The defenders of basic equality and basic respect who also defend the importance of social esteem will have to tell us what kinds of social and political arrangements would both respond to the need for differential esteem *and* be compatible

13 Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", in Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: An Essay*, Princeton: Princeton, 1992.

14 This can be a Nietzschean vision of the power of the noble, or what Fukuyama calls megalothymia. See: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: The Free Press, 1992.

with an egalitarian ethos of mutual respect and basic care. It must not lead to the formation of second-class and first class citizens.¹⁵ So the first issue is *compatibility of esteem with the egalitarian ethos of mutual respect*.¹⁶ Further, one can ask about the compatibility of esteem and respect with universal forms of loving care such as impartial concern for human well-being.

Second, compatibility with egalitarianism points towards a universalistic negative norm of absence of certain kind of disesteem. But mere lack of disesteem does not meet the need for differential esteem. Presumably there is a need for genuine esteem. If genuine esteem is difficult and takes time and energy, there is a question of *whose, if anyone's, positive duty* is it to engage in the 'esteem-services' of forming and expressing a well-founded judgements at all?¹⁷ Someone may be pretty confident that a book by her colleague is brilliant, but she will need to read it properly before she can publish a review, and this will take time and energy *etc.* So perhaps there's no duty (strictly speaking) to do it?

Or perhaps there is not only a negative duty not to stigmatise *a priori* ('this author is of such and such ethnicity, gender, age so I need not read the book—it must be rubbish'), and a conditional *a posteriori* negative duty that *if* one takes part in esteem-services one does it in an unbiased manner (basically, writes a review based on the qualities of the book) but also a general positive professional duty to do one's share, in this case write a sufficient number of reviews and serve as referee for journals sufficiently often? After all, there are pressing issues of deeply sedimented invisibility of the contributions of some groups (Honneth's prime example is the invisible work of women). On a more positive note, engaging in mutual and honest esteem-services can enhance solidarity between the parties.

As a flipside of the same question (whose task or duty is it to engage in esteem-services?), we can ask about permissions—who is even entitled to stick their nose in someone else's business and to form an opinion on their esteem-worthiness? Is it a proper business of the state, for example? And while

15 For example Axel Honneth and Charles Taylor are trying to follow this differentiated path, Nancy Fraser stresses egalitarian participatory parity as the *only* metaprinciple. See: Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Recognition or Redistribution*, *op. cit.*

16 All of the kinds of esteem discussed below are to be compatible with equal moral standing of everyone, as well as the right for self-determination and personal autonomy. But the need for esteem goes beyond considerations of respect for rights and autonomy: it involves differential feedback concerning the concrete choices one has made, not merely respect for the right to make those choices.

17 Geoffrey Brennan and Philip Pettit, *The Economy of Esteem: An Essay on Civil and Political Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

it may be okay for people to judge that, say, my conference talk is half-baked, and quite okay to say it aloud as well, what about similar judgements concerning my general orientation in life or my sexuality or my personal pet projects? Are these best left protected by norms of privacy?

Third, a different kind of problem is to identify the phenomena where the logic of esteem is appropriately at work. Conceptually, one can also always ask: is such and such really a case of esteem at all; or is something *first and foremost* a case of esteem? For example cultural differences may not be first and foremost a matter of esteem, but of respect for the individuals' cultural rights, but may nonetheless secondarily be a matter of esteem as well.

And if we add to these three the *fourth* question of how esteem is related to solidarity, we get four challenges that we can discuss in each of the three contexts. To recap, these are compatibility with universalistic principles ('universalism-issue'), the issue of distributing positive duties and permissions ('duties and permissions-issue'), the basis for the identification of various phenomena as cases of esteem at all ('definition-question'), and finally the 'solidarity-issue'.

4 The Case Against Stereotypical Stigma

The first case to be discussed is the freedom from disesteem: it is the case against stereotypical stigmatising, which would lead to lowered self-esteem. Everyone has a 'deficiency need' not to be classified as a second-class citizen, and to be able to appear in public without shame.¹⁸ At this level, the main struggle is to remove unfounded stereotypical, stigmatising images of inherent inferiority of some groups or individuals, and it aims at equality, or 'participatory parity' (Fraser). *No trait is an excuse for second-order citizenship.*

This is related to such cases of 'recognition of difference' as cultural differences, 'race', ethnicity, group memberships, sexual orientation, or disabilities which need not directly be cases of achievements or merits. Undeserved disesteem, when internalised, could lower one's self-esteem precisely in the way that is central in the debates of recognition, so this intelligible connection between the regard from others and one's self-regard is the reason to group these cases under the title of 'esteem'. This settles the definition-question. The reason to think that we have here a separate subclass of *esteem* (as opposed to respect or care), is precisely the connection to self-esteem: such disesteem may

18 On deficiency and growth needs, see: Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 1943, pp. 370–396.

harmfully affect one's self-esteem, one's assessment of one's particular qualities, such as ethnicity *etc.*¹⁹

There is a valid normative principle forbidding undeserved disesteem on the basis of arbitrary irrelevant traits. It would be a case of disesteem to stigmatise some group of people as such that 'they will not contribute anything in any case' or 'they will not excel in any case'. Here the relevant principle is straightforwardly universalistic, perhaps Nancy Fraser's principle of participatory parity does the work. Note however that it is not egalitarian in the *comparative* distributive sense, which each should get their fair share, and the fair share depends on what others get. Rather, it demands that everyone is entitled to *full* freedom from oppression of this kind. In this context, there is no normative tension with the modern ethos of universalism whatsoever, thus answering or pre-empting the universalism-issue.²⁰

Along the lines of Pettit's republicanism, the ideal is to have a *guaranteed* freedom from unfounded disesteem.²¹ In these cases, the tension with universal respect or with care for the needy and the vulnerable does not arise, as elements of both are included in the idea. This claim has two kinds of repercussions: (i) a rightful claim not to be looked down upon on the basis of such *irrelevant* things as colour of skin (corresponding to the demand on others to refrain from looking down in this way), and (ii) a rightful claim to the possession of goods (such as clean clothes, or access to personal hygiene) which are in the historical situation perceived necessary for a proper non-inferior condition, and whose lack can make one's appearance an "affront to senses" and will connote an inferior status.²²

19 The term commonly used for the inferiority in question is 'second-order citizenship'. This term may also be misleading. Some aspects of 'second-order citizenship' betray a lack of *respect* because the members of this group are denied certain rights or entitlements. But even when such rights are in principle taken care of, problems may persist: especially the ability to appear in public without shame seems to connect to esteem rather than to respect.

20 No cultural membership is a reason for denigration or less than a full membership. *Pace* Taylor, this is not however a mere *presumption* of equality which would have to be cashed out in more detailed assessments of the contributions of a culture. It is a standing requirement to realise that no-one is normatively speaking a second-class citizen, whether a member of a cultural minority or not.

21 On the importance of guarantees, see: Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

22 Joel Feinberg, *Offence to Others: The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law* (Vol. 2), New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

In the latter case, (case ii), the fault need not lie so much with the person whose senses are affronted, and who responds, (although expressing one's attitudes may be inconsiderate even when the attitudes are not as such unfitting) or with the person who is the bearer of the "offending" features, but on whatever factor (say, the unjust basic structure of society) that is responsible for the lack of goods in question. Lack of these goods thus constitutes a double harm: the goods are needed in themselves (say, for hygiene), but their lack further constitutes a deficit in the social basis of self-esteem. This will further affect what sort of responses from others is appropriate. Some features are irrelevant and it would be arbitrary to denigrate people on their basis; some other features are meaningfully related to how to appear in public, but one's lack of means of decent appearances may well be a form of injustice, so expressing one's denigration of someone who doesn't have the required means to appear in public without shame would merely add insult to injury. The right response would be to work against the injustice responsible for the lack of the required goods.

What about the issue of duties and permissions? Well, it is everyone's business in the moral community to prevent anyone from being stigmatised. Given the clear moral character of these violations, everyone has a permission to intervene gross violations. So, positive measures are needed over and above refraining from any stigmatising activities oneself. The state should not only avoid discriminatory policies on its own behalf, it should also take steps to prevent intersubjective discrimination between individuals. And individuals should not only avoid discrimination, but should support a political society or state which also refrains from discrimination. Arguably everyone has a positive moral duty to do one's share in taking a public stand against racism, sexism, etc. What one's share is will depend on the circumstances.

What about 'solidarity' in this context? The word that comes to mind is 'human' solidarity, related to the avoidance of shame and stigma in the eyes of others, and the motivation to support those who face such obstacles. As there are moral duties and permissions involved, it is also a matter of moral solidarity to bear the burdens in preventing anyone from being discriminated against. In a sense these humane and ethical dispositions and forms of regard form only the core or skeleton (non-discrimination) of the thicker forms of social solidarity. The form of social esteem based on contributions to social goods will provide some flesh to this skeleton.

5 On Contributions to the Common Good

The second case is positive esteem, prestige or standing based on contributions to the societal good, related in Honneth's picture to the division of labour,

and what Durkheim called organic solidarity.²³ In Honneth's words: "‘prestige’ or ‘standing’ signifies the degree of social recognition the individual earns for his or her form of self-realisation by contributing, to a certain extent, to the practical realisation of society's abstractly defined goals".²⁴ Again, one can see why this is a form of esteem by an appeal to its understandable relation to positive self-relations or self-esteem.

Whereas the moral duty against disesteem is universalist in concerning everyone (at the zero level of lack of disesteem), this second layer of esteem is more exclusive in covering only all members of one society. It is also less thoroughly egalitarian, but it, too, has an egalitarian or sufficientarian element. Although Honneth stresses the differential, non-egalitarian nature of esteem, based as it is on different contributions, traits, achievements *etc.*, his ideal for a good society nonetheless seems to be rather 'egalitarian' and 'sufficientarian' rather than 'meritocratic' at the level of social, public esteem. Insofar as there are social positions with advantages, there should be an equal opportunity to them.²⁵ Further, in a good society, all contributing members of a good society enjoy sufficient social esteem, greater esteem than zero—they all are participants in producing the common good. Even though different careers, jobs or professions enjoy different kind of social valuation (to be discussed shortly), we can also abstract from the differences between people in different jobs and stress what is common to them: they are both "contributors to the social good" and are to be esteemed as such. The relevant norms are to be public, to help avoid biases in esteem. I think there is an important argument to be made here: one should indeed tame meritocratic 'megalothymia' and focus on *sufficient* contributions in the context of societal good, to the ideal of 'good enough citizen', and deal with the individual differences and ideals of perfection and desert and merit in the context of self-realisation.²⁶

23 Contributing to common good might have two sub-species that perhaps should be separated because they seem to generate different kinds of esteem: you can give a contribution which many other people could also give or you could give a unique (or near unique) contribution based on your unique talents and skills. Thanks to Petteri Niemi for pointing out the relevance of this distinction.

24 Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

25 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973/1971; Andrew Mason, *Levelling the Playing Field*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

26 To the extent that differential merits are to be taken as a basis in societal recognition and redistribution, the challenge of separating the society's contribution from the contributions of the individuals must be faced; similarly the issues of whether one should distribute in accordance with effort, skill, outcome *etc.*

In a good society no-one is unwillingly unemployed or excluded from making useful contributions to the common good.²⁷ I would go so far as to reverse the Kantian dictum to read: “never treat anyone as a mere ends, but give them a chance to be useful means to the good of others”. For example disabled people should get a chance to participate.²⁸ This is still quite an egalitarian demand in requiring at least equal opportunity (and anticipating limited inequality in the actual contributions) and being sternly against fixed hierarchies of overall ranks or statuses, and against what Taylor has called hierarchical complementarity of the premodern kind.²⁹ Unlike that system, where priests, warriors, and workers each complement each other but nonetheless priests are superior, and have higher status, this would be *horizontal* complementarity—each, in their role as a contributor, is equally necessary and valuable.³⁰ One intuition pump is the experience of the unemployed of no longer being needed, being necessary for anyone. The ideal is that in addition to having a basic equal standing as a citizen, everyone has a particular positively valued standing and each role is necessary. This is arguably the form of social esteem most central to Honneth’s project.

It would be unrealistic and undesirable to aspire towards a world in which all professions, careers, and jobs enjoy the same social status, or a world where all individuals occupying the same kind of role, or office, would enjoy similar social esteem independently of how well they fulfil the tasks as individual role-holders. The next section will focus on such individual differences both in public roles and more personal pursuits, but even when abstracting from differences in individual performances, there may be acceptable as well as normatively unacceptable variations in the general social esteem that comes with occupying this kind of role or office rather than that (the usual candidates are that those roles demand more education or effort or are more dangerous; or are harder to get into, or demand unique talents, or are most vital for the functioning of the society, or come with desirable benefits thanks to the nature of

27 In late modern conditions, basic income may well best be the best arrangement in this respect.

28 We have discussed the nature of esteem for contributions to shared goods in more detail, see: Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, “Esteem for Contributions to the Common Good: The Role of Personifying Attitudes and Instrumental Value” in Michel Seymour (ed.), *The Plural States of Recognition*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010, pp. 98–121.

29 See the chapter on social justice and Spencer in David Johnston, *A Brief History of Justice*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. See also Joel Feinberg’s classic *Social Philosophy*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

30 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

the tasks, etc.). There are likely to be many kinds of particular valuable characteristics that different professions, roles, and jobs have, and which mean that the individual can enjoy certain esteem merely by occupying this role rather than that. In the condition of value pluralism, these are valued or appreciated or ranked differently by rival value horizons (this will be discussed, concerning individuals, in the next section). Such valuations seem to be pretty pervasive, and give further possibilities of getting differential social esteem. The lesson in this section is however that we should be able also to see through these, and appreciate the importance of what all such offices, professions, and jobs have in common—they are all variants of the more abstract role of ‘being a contributor to the shared good’. This should *limit* the differences in the recognitive rewards for different positions to a reasonable degree and also justify the demand that in each of the tasks one gets the decent sufficient level of social esteem.

Whose task is it to see to it, that this sufficient social esteem for contributions is taking place? It seems that the society should publicly recognise the value of different contributions. Here, it seems that the public and collective level is what matters—expectable and actual attitudes and expressions of individuals.

Between the whole society and individuals, one can envisage various labour unions, or professional ‘corporations’ or other ‘communities of standing’ which could serve as ‘second families’ as in G.W.F. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. Membership in them would automatically channel some social esteem, and indeed sufficient social esteem required, and they could keep up the good practices in their professions, and appeal to professional pride. What this would mean in contemporary working world would require further reflection. (In the next section I discuss various ‘pockets of esteem’ serving as contexts for projects of self-realisation, they are at least functionally different from the unions that would mediate public esteem for contributions to the societal good).

The individuals’ tasks in this respect are first and foremost carrying out their “station and their duties”. The extra critical duties are then arguably mediated and directed towards the public culture: to correct the gender bias, or occupational biases, etc. This seems to be what Honneth has in mind in his references to a “shared value horizon”—a better description might be a shared public space where the contestation concerning the public values has a point. All members carry some responsibility about this, and can be more or less solidaristic in carrying out their duties.

As to the issue of solidarity, this kind of context of esteem is the main bulk of social solidarity. Durkheimian social solidarity takes place when the division of labour works. But one should add that equal opportunity is crucial for

solidarity. An unusual but illuminating perspective concerning solidarity is solidarity from the worse off to the better off.³¹ Genuine solidarity requires that the worse off do not have a reason to be embittered, but accept that the resulting differences are justified. That would be a tall order if they did not even have a reasonable opportunity to the same positions.

6 Projects of Self-Realisation

To get to the third context of esteem, one can build on the Hegelian idea that self-realisation requires deeds, and one cannot be a privileged authority in the unbiased evaluation of such deeds: there is always at least an implicit relevant audience involved.³² Here, Hegel's argument resembles Ludwig Wittgenstein's argument against private language. Without any friction provided by the feedback from others, we all could be victims of an illusory sense of self-grandeur: we all could be great poets in our own self-image whether or not we bother to realise our great ideas, and actually write the poems and subject them to evaluation by others. Positive feedback from others concerning the worthwhile-ness of one's goals is also relevant for one's motivation. As John Rawls put it, "Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism".³³

Thus persons arguably have a 'growth need' to get unbiased personalised feedback concerning one's projects of self-realisation. Feedback concerning success in such projects, or excellence in such practices (whether artistic, scientific, political, career-related, hobby-related, etc.) is a meaningful basis of self-esteem. It is so whether or not it meets the criteria of contributory esteem. The fact that such pursuit is good *for* the agent herself is not the basis of esteem, (although we naturally hope the people we care for to succeed in their lives). The basis of esteem is simply whether one is 'doing something worthwhile well'. And the context for the *need for feedback* is the legitimate aim of non-illusory self-realisation through worthwhile goals. Any Stoic attempt to rid us of the dependence on the positive opinions of others would be insensitive to the dialogical nature of projects of self-realisation.

31 Andreas Wildt, "Solidarität als Strukturbegriff politisch-sozialer Gerechtigkeit", in *Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften*, Vol., 48, pp. 39–60, 2007.

32 See: G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic: Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline (Part 1)*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991/1830, § 140.

33 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

Here, I distinguish the context of self-realisation and the context of contributions to social goods for analytical and normative purposes. One should not underestimate the degree to which individual self-realisation takes place via such socially useful roles. The Hegelian picture stresses that one's subjectivity can be fully immersed in societal goals.³⁴ Similarly, Marxian criticism of alienation has the aspect that assumes that genuine self-realisation is in genuine communal relations to one another.³⁵ Nonetheless, one should not overestimate these points either: not everything about self-realisation is about promoting shared ends. And even in cases where it is, we can examine it *qua* a contribution to a shared good, or *qua* an achievement in a self-realisation project. This will make a normative difference.³⁶

The people engaging in projects of self-realisation have a need for esteem from others if they aim at self-realisation *through worthwhile goals*. The feedback in question can evaluate either the *worthwhileness* of the aims, or one's *success* in pursuing them. The sense in which we can evaluate success is pretty straightforward although may demand fine-tuned power of judgement, but there are rival theories concerning worthwhileness. I will here mention two: first, *Rawls's Aristotelian Principle*: one's aims in life are such that when successful, they maximally actualise one's talents and potentials, so that one does not waste one's talents.

Second, *Perfectionism*: the aims are good, thanks to features that make them worth doing. The person's aims are appreciable, when they are worthwhile, or choiceworthy, or are a case of Aristotelian 'life in accordance with virtue'. It is the valuable nature of goals that matters, whatever the degree to which they realise one's talents. It is not a wasted life to leave some of one's special talents unrealised, as long as the goals one successfully pursues are worthwhile.

34 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*; Michael Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

35 It has been claimed that analogously in post-industrial work, in studios rather than factories, one's work requires that one put one's personality at stake. (Of course putting one's personality at stake for the state or for a private company has a very different significance). But one should not overestimate: Charles Taylor's depiction of nine-to-five Enlightenment and free time Romanticism has something to it. Charles Taylor, *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

36 See also the connection between self-realisation and self-determination: Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication: A Critical Study of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy*, Boston: Brill, 2009.

Finally, the political implications of this kind of personalised esteem are worth examining. The central political implication is to support pockets of esteem, such practices or associational activities as arts, sciences, and hobbies, where one can strive to excel, but at the same time to prevent general rank-formation in wider society outside such pockets to avoid wrong kind of meritocracy. It is arguably *not* the state's business to govern how individuals esteem one another—rather there is a variety of pockets of esteem such as the art-communities for artistic achievements, scientific community for scientific achievements, sports-audiences for achievements in sports, and so on, which good societies contain. These are mainly voluntary associations and subcultures that individuals may freely enter or inhabit. This is central to Rawls's idea of “social union of social unions” or Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot's idea of different economies of worth, or Alasdair MacIntyre's idea of various practices with standards of excellence internal to them.³⁷ One may say that the horizontal recognition is to be provided by other participants, whereas the state or basic structure merely publicly acknowledges the principles. We can quite safely assume that any feasible society will have some such outlets for the desires to excel and get public affirmation for one's achievements.³⁸

There is no duty for individuals to enter such competitive achievements: if someone does not want to achieve that much, or compete with others, or prove oneself, or show to the world, or ‘leave a trace’ or ‘make a difference’, one need not. And even if one does try, it is possible that no one is around, or has time or energy to evaluate one's activities. However, when someone does give positive feedback, and holds in esteem the activities, it is a sign that the agent has done something which is of value according to the evaluator. That is, in some broad sense it contributes to something which is valued by the evaluator, and this may create some sense of belonging, solidarity or even gratitude towards the agent, even though the act need not have directly benefited or contributed much to the good of the other, or to the common good, but has realised something that the other values highly.

37 Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: The Economies of Worth*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. Ricoeur insightfully connects Boltanski and Thevenot to the topic of recognition esteem. See: Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005. See also: Axel Honneth, “Dissolutions of the Social: The Social Theory of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot”, in *The I in We*, *op. cit.*; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London: Duckworth, 1985/1981 (2nd ed.); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*

38 In a sense, such outlets tame the Fukuyama-type megalothymic pressures; see: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History*, *op. cit.*; John O'Neill, “Hegel against Fukuyama”, *Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1997, pp. 191–196; Arto Laitinen, “Interpersonal Recognition”, *op. cit.*

But what about outside such ‘pockets of esteem’? Perhaps the idea is that in the context of early education, as pupils or students, we are given tasks, and our progress is measured, and often given grades, and the tasks are over when we have become responsible adults. From then onwards, it is up to us. Educators are in the special position to instruct, criticise, grade, and evaluate. But there is something paternalistic in evaluations on how individuals live their daily lives (even if the evaluations are adequate), at least by strangers. It seems that for adults, the idea of sharing one’s life with someone brings with it a position to criticise it, personally: it is the friend’s business to evaluate, but it would be impermissible for a stranger to do so. Of course, artists and social critics are at the liberty to criticise a way of life, but that is not to be taken personally.

Finally, some such pockets are inescapable: moral and legal obligations, responsibilities and violations are one thing, with specific patterns for retribution and restoration. Those are not *optional*, whether we like it or not. Implicit in the Hegelian idea of *Sittlichkeit* is the idea of moral and legal culture which shapes emotional responses to wrongdoing. Contributions to the common good, via paying our taxes, and contributing to our daily jobs, perhaps doing a civil service, leave room for choices, but there may be obligation to contribute (according to one’s skills) in some ways, and when the overall situation is bad, in some specific ways (say, joining the army during war). Democratic citizenship may well entail obligations to participate in collective self-rule and try to do our shares.

7 Basic Income

One can test the various ideas of esteem, as well as respect and care, and their relationship to social solidarity with the case of basic income. Basic income is a social benefit, a cash transfer that is delivered to everyone unconditionally of their other income. It is funded by taxing the other incomes, and by other forms of taxation. For any Nordic welfare state, a transition from the current highly bureaucratic jungle of different benefits to one single basic income scheme would lessen the need for monitoring people, and for the middle classes it would not make any difference to their incomes: they would fund their own share of the basic income with higher taxation concerning their other income. For the richest it might mean higher taxation. There is a debate on what the expected economic effects would be: higher taxation in ‘further work’ might be an incentive to work less (which, for reasons to do with ecology and people’s happiness might not be a bad idea as such) thus lowering the highest sustainable basic income from what it would be if people would work as much as now.

Further, as people would not be forced to work, no-one would do the 'dirty work'—which might put pressure to raise the salaries for those jobs. On the other hand, the job-providers might want to lower the salaries and appeal to the fact that people have income independently of what they earn with extra work. The economic consequences of the scheme are an important viewpoint of assessing the basic income schemes, but tend to view humans as '*homo economicus*'. There may well be a purely economic case for basic income: it is an investment that pays off.³⁹ But in addition, one can try to justify (or criticise) the idea of basic income in relation to the three Honnethian forms of mutual recognition: respect, care, and esteem.

Philippe van Parijs in his *Real Freedom for All* does this in terms of Honnethian respect.⁴⁰ He argues that the principle of real freedom for all, as it is a matter of means and not mere rights, implies that everyone ought to enjoy highest sustainable basic income. He appeals centrally to negative freedom in the personal sphere, that is, to personal autonomy as freedom to live as one might like to live. This defence of the highest sustainable income is based on the principle of respect for autonomy. Arguably such high unconditional income would be an institution manifesting high solidarity, high support for all members of the society. It thus shows how universalistic respect can be united with solidarity.

A defence of basic income can also be based on another Honnethian form of recognition, namely societal care for the needy. It is because obstacles to people's well-being matter, that a scheme of basic income, devised to remove such obstacles, is defensible. This is the kind of attitude that David Miller calls solidarity. It involves willingness to share and bear burdens, for example in the form of taxation—it can be a very demanding form of solidarity indeed.

While basic income can thus appeal to care or solidarity in Miller's sense or appeal to respect for freedom in van Parijs's sense, thus covering two of Honneth's three forms of recognition, it is harder to see whether politics of *esteem* is relevant. How could *unconditional* basic income be experienced as *conditional* recognition based on one's contributions?

But once we distinguish the three contexts of esteem, it is clear that basic income fits nicely with two of them: the struggle against stigmatising inferiority (e.g., permanent unemployment) can well take the form of basic income. Everyone in a scheme of highest sustainable basic income would certainly

39 It may well be that one could distinguish the economic relations between humans from the desert- or merit-based relationships, to correct David Miller in *Social Justice*, *op. cit.*

40 Philippe Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All: What (if Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

afford a clean shirt and other necessities needed for appearing in public without shame. Further, the stigmatising aspects of social services are one of the main reasons for the support of basic income in the bureaucratic Nordic societies with high level of social security and welfare services. An unconditional basic income would remove the stigmatising effects and experiences deteriorating one's self-esteem that are involved in having to label oneself officially as a kind of second-order citizen in order to be entitled to welfare benefits. Basic income would be handed to everyone, to the rich and poor, like many benefits like child support in contemporary Finland and other Nordic countries, so that there is no specific stigma in being a recipient—everyone is a recipient in any case.

Basic income would at the same time support the projects of self-realisation and feedback concerning them, in various local pockets of esteem. This is so for the same reasons that van Parijs appeals to: people would have real opportunities to engage in projects of self-realisation if they would not lack the means to do so.

So far, so good. But what about contributions to the societal good, the key idea in Durkheimian social solidarity? There is an apparent incompatibility: how could unconditional basic income be conditional on contributions? I think there are a couple of thoughts that will be of help. The first point was already mentioned above: it was the idea that everyone, as a member of some profession or another, occupying any useful social role, will be rewarded in a rather egalitarian manner for those contributions. If it can be shown that we can reasonably expect everyone actually to so contribute, we can conceptualise the basic income as a kind of citizens' wage. For sure, unconditional basic income differs from those versions of a *conditional* citizens' wage, which specify as their conditions a compulsory civil service in some or other state institution. But there can be an unconditional version as well, where the idea and expectation is that everyone will in fact end up contributing to the common good. Take, for example, the invisible household work of women, the central Honnethian case. We should not reconceptualise that as paid labour, but rather see it as a contribution to the shared good and thus as one of the contributions that people receiving basic income will take part in. Or take the various innovative ways in which people contribute to the creative commons, or merely sustain the institutions and languages and practices and minority cultures and economies of their societies—it is likely that merely by participating in the social life one will engage abundantly in productive and reproductive activity which justifies conceiving basic income as a reward for contributions to the shared good. This can be coupled with an *ethical* demand to contribute, even when there is, in practice, no accounting of how much everyone does analogously to

the social pressure to be an active political citizen. The non-monetary rewards in terms of general social esteem for everyone as a contributor, and differential esteem within different pockets of esteem, will be highly motivating even when the monetary reward, basic income, will not be specific enough to reflect one's contributions. Thus, there is room for thinking that basic income would actually also be a modification *within* the Honnethian-Durkheimian idea of solidarity and social esteem—rather than a reason to drop that idea.

8 Conclusion

To sum up, this article has discussed, in the last subsection with reference to the idea of substantial and unconditional basic income, the relationships to social solidarity of the three main forms of mutual recognition, namely respect, care, and esteem, and of these especially the three forms of esteem. The three contexts of esteem and self-esteem are normatively very different, in how they are related to the norms of universality (the norm against stigmatisation), publicity (contributions to the social good) and standards of excellence intrinsic to individual practices, associations, and the unity of one's life (the goal of self-realisation). The chapter has argued that it is important to distinguish these three forms of esteem, to be able to see how the challenges to any politics of esteem can be tackled differently in different cases.

Sociality, Anti-Sociality, and Social Work

Political Imagination in a Social Democratic Welfare State in Decline

Heikki Ikäheimo

This chapter focuses on a concept that is central for social work, namely sociality itself. It suggests that after years of ever intensifying pressure in Finland towards marketisation of the public sector, social work included, there is serious need to stop and ask what the task description of social work should be in the first place, and to what extent it is compatible with the introduction of market-principles into the network in which social work takes place.¹ This requires thinking clearly about what ‘sociality’ is, what promotes it and what corrodes it. I will discuss two everyday ways to think of sociality and analogically two approaches to sociality in social theory. I claim that an ethically or morally neutral view of sociality exemplified by thinkers such as Max Weber and John Searle in social theory is too undifferentiated and thus unhelpful for the theory and practice of social work. On the alternative, morally or ethically non-neutral view that can be reconstructed from Axel Honneth’s work the corner-stone of sociality are attitudes and relations of ‘recognition’ between persons. I elaborate on this Honnethian view, clearing up some of its remaining ambiguities and apply it briefly in social work. Along the way I propose definitions of the concepts of ‘social problem’ and ‘social innovation’ that avoid misleading ambiguities resulting from morally neutral conceptions of sociality. The chapter is written with the Finnish situation in mind, to address that situation, and it partly reflects presuppositions, intuitions and sensibilities

* Parts of this text were originally published in Finnish. See: Heikki Ikäheimo, “Sosiaalisuus ja epäsosiaalisuus sosiaalityössä” [“Sociality and Anti-Sociality in Social Work”], in Petteri Niemi and Tuija Kotiranta (eds.), *Sosiaalityön normatiivinen perusta* [The Normative Foundation of Social Work] Helsinki, Yliopistopaino, 2008. The original version was written mainly for social work professionals rather than for the profession of philosophers and theorists. The work on this version was funded by the Australian Research Council project ‘The Social Ontology of Personhood’ and The University of New South Wales.

1 The pressure towards marketisation of the public sector in Finland clearly reflects the international trend called ‘New Public Management’. This term however has not caught public imagination in Finland (possibly due to the clumsiness of the Finnish translation ‘uusi julkisjohtaminen’), at least to the degree that the term ‘neo-liberalism’ (‘uusliberalismi’) has.

fairly natural in the context of a (waning) Nordic social democratic welfare state. I leave it to the reader to judge how natural they are in other societies.

1 Social Work and Anti-Social Innovations

In an article on what she calls a change of paradigm in welfare strategic thinking, Raija Julkunen, a professor in social policy and a well-known public intellectual in Finland, draws attention to “a kind of paradox of trust”. What she has in mind is the fact that Finns broadly speaking still have a strong trust in the welfare state, despite the fact that there is “little trust (...) in parties, politicians, the government, the parliament, the market forces, the European Union, civil servants, associations or political movements”.² Julkunen poignantly asks what exactly it is then that people have trust in when they have trust in the welfare state. She points out that there is in fact one particular profession that is undoubtedly highly esteemed and trusted by most Finns: the professionals of basic public services. Julkunen writes:

I do not think this is only a matter of professional skills; rather, these professions are expected to be, in a sense, professions of caring. Their function is not only to care and medicate, but also to keep at bay the ‘no-one really cares’-world where everyone only thinks of their own interest.³

In a world of ever more furiously globalising capitalism and neoliberal ideology, and an era of ‘no-one really cares’ or ‘everyone only thinks of their own interest’, to borrow from Julkunen, basic public services—childcare, elderly care and nursing especially, but also the police, the fire department and social work—are increasingly seen as the last institutional instances of care and sociality. An especially dark shadow in Julkunen’s sombre vision is cast, however, by the fact that the functioning of these basic services as instances of caring, as mediators of sociality and solidarity, and as a ‘cement of trust’ is itself under serious threat today.

Julkunen believes that there are reasons to doubt whether the professions of caring and sociality would maintain their function if basic public services were

2 Raija Julkunen, “Hyvinvointistrategisen ajattelun muutos” [“The Transformation of Welfare-Strategic Thinking”], in Petri Kinnunen and Kaisa Kostamo-Pääkkö (eds.), *Alueelliset hyvinvointistrategiat* [*Regional Welfare-Strategies*], Pohjois-Suomen sosiaalialan osaamiskeskus, 2003, pp. 36–7.

3 Raija Julkunen, *Ibid.*, p. 37.

wholly marketised, and eventually (which she sees very likely) taken over by multinational corporations. It is worth asking what the professional ethics and conditions of work in care-work would look like in 'free market conditions', and with what kinds of motivations people would be drawn to the industries of welfare-production and care-business. As Adam Smith wrote a long time ago,

[i]t is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.⁴

Smith's famous insight is that in a market-context, in the roles of buyers and sellers, producers and consumers, service-providers and customers, individuals do not (are not expected, encouraged, or allowed to) act out of immediate concern for the interests of others, but merely for their own self-interest. The interests of others have only instrumental significance as conditions or means of serving one's own interest.

When we talk about extending 'the market-principle' into the realm of basic public services, including social work, it is essential to keep in mind and talk honestly about this fundamental assumption of the selfish motivation of and thereby instrumental relations between market-actors, as an essential element of the market-principle. There is a sense in which relations between individuals, groups, institutions and enterprises organised purely according to market-principles are not social relations at all, but instrumental relations in which agents regard each other in an instrumentalising or reifying manner.

Smith's depiction of the purely selfish motivation of butchers, brewers or bakers of course depicts only an ideal-type or role-norm. A baker who in fact relates to his customers *purely* instrumentally, without even the *slightest* hint of immediate or non-instrumental concern for their well-being—thus fully living up to the role—is hardly the usual case, but rather a limiting case in real life approximated only by psychopaths. A face-to-face encounter with another human being triggers, in psychologically more or less normal people in more or less civilised and peaceful conditions, usually at least some degree of sympathy or ethical motivation that makes a *purely* instrumentalising or reifying way of relating to her almost impossible.

There are of course ways of trying to eliminate such 'being moved' and the social bond it creates. An efficient way is distancing: it is considerably easier to have disregard for people with whom one is not in concrete contact than it is

4 Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, London: Penguin Books, 1970, p. 119.

for people one regularly encounters face to face. Therefore, distancing strategic planning and decision making from the grassroots level of work necessarily affected by the bonds and therefore friction of social relations tends to be from a business-perspective the rational thing to do. The more distanced strategic planning and decision making is from the workers, the easier it is to get rid of them or worsen their working conditions without friction and emotional costs if required by the market situation.

The word 'social innovation' has recently been widely used in Finland in discourses on social policy. I believe there is serious need to stop and ask whether the marketisation of basic social services is more likely to produce or encourage social, or rather *anti*-social innovations. Let me cite Julkunen again:

Marketisation is an unpredictable and creeping process, whose consequences are difficult to foresee. The logic of markets produces centralisation, multi-national chains and corporations. Retirement and life-insurance are largely the business of massive insurance companies, and the capitals of pension funds are among the largest concentrations of finance capital moving swiftly across national borders. Also care services are the object of increasingly centralised chains. The small care enterprises founded by Finnish women who often have a genuine motivation to provide better service could soon be pushed out from the market or swallowed by multinational chains, in a manner similar to what has happened in retail. Privatised service-business may also easier feed into technology-business; the privatisation of prisons and security-services feeds the rapidly growing security-technology and private welfare-business feeds welfare-technology.⁵

Julkunen refers at this juncture to experiences from the prison-industry in the United States, and to what she describes as 'repulsive' innovations—cages, fences, electric shock devices and so forth—which the cooperation and shared interests of security-business and technology innovators has produced.⁶ Is it possible that also social work would eventually be privatised on a broad front, and if so, what kind of cost-efficient methods and instruments could the social industry together with technology innovators come up with? 'Human technology'—one of the buzzwords in recent years in Finland—by no means always means humane technology.

5 *Op. cit.*, pp. 33–34.

6 *Ibid.*, fn. 4.

A little less dramatically, what kinds of social or anti-social tendencies does the introduction of the market-principle on a broad front in the service-networks in which public social work takes place involve? How to address multiple deprivation and the so called 'nasty' social problems in a situation in which social work has been disintegrated into distinct functions and many of the separated functions privatised? What will the cooperation of local public social workers be like with the extremely cost-efficient multinational care, therapy, consult, and education companies always sensitive to the sentiments of their share-holders—assuming that such companies will eventually win the local tenders and will thus be the address where individuals and families with multiple social problems are sent as their 'service users', or where they will end up with their social service vouchers?

Whereas it is not easy, due to the involved psychological costs, for a small local care-business to relate to its employees and customers in the instrumental or anti-social manner required by the market-principle, this takes hardly any effort from the executives of a multinational corporation. In this respect the structurally anti-social corporations will have a clear competitive edge to local care-entrepreneurs embedded in local networks of social relations and psychically attached to them.

There is a serious need to consider how the work motivation and relations to his clients of an employee of a care-business concern is likely to be affected by her knowing or believing that the executives and share-holders of the concern regard both its employees and customers in a radically anti-social way. Do we seriously expect that a communal social worker can—maintaining his intellectual and moral integrity—trust that his clients, typically in highly vulnerable situations in life, will be treated in a morally dignified manner in the various knots of a service-network that has to a large extent been taken over by the market-principle?⁷

Even less dramatically, supposing that the public service-network is not privatised on a broad front, how does the introduction of managerial principles and logic of industrial production in public social work—whether explicitly or implicitly—influence the nature of this activity? An innovation decisive for the birth of modern industrialism was differentiating the production-process into distinct acts along an assembly line, this being immensely more efficient than having the same thing produced by a craftsman. Yet, it is highly questionable

7 According to *Sosiaalialan ammatillisen työn eettiset ohjeet* [*Ethical Guidelines of Professionalism in Social Work*], Talentia, principle 1, "[e]very human being (...) has a right to morally dignified treatment" ("Jokainen ihminen on (...) oikeutettu moraalisesti arvokkaaseen kohteluun").

whether it really makes much sense to try to address at least multiple deprivation or “nasty” social problems by means of differentiated and distinct service-acts imitating the logic of industrial production.⁸ There is no doubt that such atomistic performances are well suited for being measured with quantitative cost-efficiency indicators, and no doubt that often the measurements suggest the outsourcing of each separate performance to be the most rational thing to do. Yet, it is a completely different question whether rationality thought in these narrow terms has much to do with practical reason needed for actually performing the work well and judging to what extent its goals have been achieved.

The content of the concept ‘social innovation’ is not particularly clear, but as a starting point we should at least distinguish social innovations from clearly *anti-social* innovations. One characteristic of an anti-social innovation in social work is that applying it in practice actually impedes encountering and treating people in need as concrete persons with real lives, and promotes their reification into cost factors or objects of distinct service-acts. More generally speaking, I suggest as a *definition of anti-social innovation* the following:

An antisocial innovation is a proposal directed to social relations or the institutional structures of the society, which promotes the corrosion of genuine sociality, weakening of social relations, or their replacement with relations that are not genuinely social.

Thought this way, a proposal for a change in social or institutional practices that promotes viewing the affected people exclusively in reifying or instrumentalising lights, such as exclusively as negative or positive cost-factors or objects of cost-elimination is an anti-social innovation *par excellence*.⁹

8 Lasse Murto, “Sosiaalityö vastuullisen hyvinvointipolitiikan välineenä” [“Social Work as a Tool of Responsible Welfare Policy”], in *Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön monisteita*, 2004, 15, p. 50.

9 Even assuming that some amount of reification or instrumentalisation is an inevitable element of social life, we still need to call it by its real name to be able to constraint it into acceptable limits. *Whether* some amount of instrumentalisation of the other really is in fact necessary in human relations is an interesting and important question. It is widely held as self-evident that it is. I believe the air of self-evidence is at least partly based on a conceptual confusion, one which I discuss in Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, “Esteem for Contributions to the Common Good: The Role of Personifying Attitudes and Instrumental Value”, in Michael Seymour (ed.), *The Plural States of Recognition*, New York: Palgrave, 2010, pp. 98–121.

Marketisation is not a simple matter, and it can be executed in various ways and to different degrees. What seems relatively clear however is that if marketisation is accepted without reflection, ideologically, as the sole truth, it creates a favourable atmosphere for anti-social innovations, and in the worst case leaves little room for any other kinds of innovations. There is a very real risk that if social work is sacrificed to anti-social innovations, it itself becomes part of the 'no-one really cares'-world of Julkunen's bleak vision. In short, it becomes unable to function as an institutional instance of care, trust and sociality, and may even end up actively working against these, thereby itself corroding the ethical or moral foundations of the society.¹⁰

2 Social and Anti-Social Sociality

Let us now assume that we do not want to sacrifice social work to anti-social innovations. In order to have a better grasp of both social work and of social innovations, we need to take a look at the very idea of *sociality* and how it differs from that of *anti-sociality*. Let us approach the phenomenon of sociality first by considering the concept of a *social problem*. According to a recent Finnish definition relevant to our theme a 'social problem' is "a phenomenon having to do with the relationship of the individual and community, which is

10 Risto Heiskala, "Sosiaaliset innovaatiot ja hegemonisten mallien muutokset: kuinka tul-kita Suomen 1990-luvun murrosta?" ["Social Innovations and Changes in Hegemonic Models: How to Interpret the Transformation in Finland in the 1990s?"], in Risto Heiskala and Eeva Luhtakallio (eds.), *Uusi jako—miten suomesta tuli kilpailukyky-yhteiskunta?* [*How Finland Turned Into a Competitiveness-Society?*], Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2006) discusses social innovations and their relation to interest-struggles. Heiskala proposes as a general definition of social innovation an innovation that implies changes in the institutional structures of the society and increases their functional efficiency (see: *Ibid.*, pp. 204–206). In talking about 'anti-social innovaions' my point is to emphasise that something can be a 'social innovation' according to this definition, and yet be 'anti-social' in ways that correspond to common sense conceptions of 'sociality' and 'anti-sociality'. Anti-social innovations may serve the interests of some, but they may in principle also serve no-one's interests. It is possible that the functional efficiency of an institution or section of public service increases in such a way that it will produce more efficiently results that are disadvantageous for everybody. Whether increase in functional efficiency is actually a good or bad thing wholly depends on the nature of the aims and results of the activity in question.

contrary to the values and norms prevailing in the society, is relatively widespread, and has a considerable effect on the society”.¹¹

This definition provides a useful starting point for further inquiry, yet it is problematic in two respects. First of all, limiting the concept of social problem only to relationships *between the individual and the community* is too restrictive. Surely social problems can also materialise in relationships *between individuals* or *between communities*. It seems furthermore fairly obvious that there are social problems having to do with relationships whose one party is an *institution*, such as an anti-social corporation functioning within the service-network, or municipal social administration single-mindedly focused on short term cost-efficiency.

Secondly, defining a social problem as “a phenomenon (...) which is contrary to the values and norms prevailing in the society” has highly problematic consequences. This has to do with the fact that the definition is morally completely neutral: according to it a phenomenon which is contrary to the prevailing values and norms is a social problem independently of the *content* of those values and norms. Hence, widespread opposition or protest against racism in a racist society is a social problem—since it is contrary to the prevailing values and norms of the society. This might seem perfectly consequent from the point of view of sociological value-neutrality, but it is deeply misleading, and at worst dangerous, from the point of view of collective self-understanding, political debate and thus concrete decision making. Surely the contents of prevailing values and norms can themselves be more or less social, or more or less *anti-social*.¹²

I suggest that in order to have an adequate grasp of sociality, anti-sociality and social problems we need significantly more robust conceptual tools, tools that can help us attain critical distance to the prevailing climate of values and norms. Let us reflect for a moment what it is that we normally mean by ‘sociality’ and ‘anti-sociality’ when we use these terms for characterising or evaluating individual characters and actions. What is a ‘social’ (or ‘sociable’) person like?¹³ In everyday speech and thought this is understood in two importantly different ways. On the one hand, someone can be characterized as ‘social’ if

11 According to *Sosiaalityön sanasto* [Vocabulary of Social Work], Stakes Viestintä 2002, by STAKES (The National Institute for Health and Welfare). (<http://sty.stakes.fi/FI/sanastot/index.htm>)

12 Risto Heiskala and Eeva Luhtakallio, *Uusi jako* contain analyses of the changes in Finnish values during the structural transformations of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s. See: Risto Heiskala and Eeva Luhtakallio, *op. cit.*

13 The Finnish word ‘sosiaalinen’ covers both meanings.

she has good 'social skills', an extensive 'social network' or capacities to build one. We can also say that such a person has plenty of 'social capital'. Note that this manner of speech is morally or ethically wholly neutral: also a person who relates to members of her 'social network' purely or mainly instrumentally or manipulatively—a ruthless exploiter, narcissist or psychopath—is a 'social (or sociable) person' according to it.

On the other hand, there is a way of thinking and talking on which an individual who relates to others mainly instrumentally or manipulatively—however developed his skills for networking, negotiation or persuasion—is on the contrary an 'anti-social' (or 'asocial') individual. This manner of thinking is not morally neutral, since according to it what makes someone a 'social' person is not the extent or efficiency of his or her social relations, but their moral or ethical quality. A helpful way to articulate this morally or ethically charged manner of thinking and talking is that according to it a social person does not see her fellow human beings merely or even mainly as things, instruments, goods, investments, cost-factors or capital—but rather as *persons*. Let us call this concept and the phenomenon it grasps 'social or genuine sociality', to distinguish it from the 'antisocial sociality' of the exploiter, narcissist or psychopath.

3 Morally Neutral and Non-Neutral Concepts of Sociality in Social Theory

It is clearly the ethically or morally non-neutral view of sociality capable of distinguishing genuine sociality from instrumentalisation or exploitation that we should have in mind if we want to conceive of social work as an activity whose goal is to foster sociality. But are there means in social theory or social philosophy for articulating and rationally reconstructing this everyday idea in a more theoretically elaborate and 'respectable' way? Importantly, not every theoretical account will do since the duality in everyday ways of speaking about sociality just mentioned is also reflected in modern social theory or social philosophy. In what follows I will first take up two highly influential theorists—Max Weber and John Searle—as examples of an 'a-moral' approach to the foundations of sociality or social reality that actually does not distinguish between anti-sociality and genuine sociality. I will then turn to an ethically or morally non-neutral view present in the work of Axel Honneth that provides in this respect a much better starting point for thinking about sociality and its opposites, not only but also in the field of social work.

To start with Weber, his definition of *social action* in chapter 1 of his *Economy and Society* is one of the founding acts of modern sociology and still often cited

in contemporary philosophical social ontology.¹⁴ According to Weber: “*Action* is ‘social’ insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course”.¹⁵ A little later in chapter 1 Weber distinguishes non-social action from social action as follows: “Overt action is *non-social* if it is oriented solely to the behaviour of inanimate objects. Subjective attitudes constitute *social* action only so far as they are oriented to the behaviour of others”.¹⁶ Weber next proceeds to define ‘social *relation*’ via the concept of ‘social action’ as he has just defined that concept. There is a social relation between individuals “insofar as (...) the action of each takes account of that of the others and is oriented in these terms. The social relationship thus consists entirely and exclusively in the existence of a probability that there will be a meaningful course of social action.”¹⁷ There are a number of details here that would merit commentary, but to put things in a rough and ready way, on Weber’s definition an action is social if the agent takes the behaviour of other agents into account in acting or in planning his actions. When two or more agents relate to each other in this way—taking each other’s behaviour into account in their own action or action plans, or as Weber says in their ‘subjective attitudes’, or as we can say simply in their intentions—a social relation exists between them.

What is relevant for our purposes is that these definitions are, as such, completely neutral with regard to the *manner* in which agents take the behaviour of others into account, or, to be more exact, neutral with regard to the *ethical or moral quality* of the attitudes or motives they have towards each other. It does not matter for the definition whether A’s attitudes or motives towards B are altruistic, cooperative, instrumentalising, or predatory. Insofar as A takes the behaviour of B into account in his intentions *in some way*, with whatever motives, his relevant actions are social; and insofar as both relate to each other in this way they have a social relation.

Searle, one of the most influential philosophical social ontologists today follows a similar a-moral or morally neutral strategy in his theory of the foundations of social life. On Searle’s account ‘status functions’, which for him are the core phenomenon of specifically human social reality (or a core ‘structure of human civilisation’ to borrow the sub-title of his recent book) depend on what

14 For one discussion, see: Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, pp. 27–33.

15 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Essay on Interpretative Sociology* (ed. Günter Roth and Claus Wittich), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 4 (my emphasis).

16 Weber, *Economy and Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 22 (my emphasis).

17 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

he calls collective 'acceptance or recognition'.¹⁸ Something has the *status of*, and thus *is* money, or the government of a country, or someone's property, if it is collectively accepted or recognised as being that, or in other words attributed that status. But what is this 'acceptance or recognition' that has such an important foundational role in Searle's account of social reality? Searle wants to emphasise that it does not mean 'approval': "Acceptance, as I construe it, goes all the way from enthusiastic endorsement to grudging acknowledgement, even the acknowledgement that one is simply helpless to do anything about, or reject, the institutions in which one finds oneself".¹⁹ And a few lines later: "I want to emphasise that 'recognition' does not imply 'approval'. Hatred, apathy, and even despair are consistent with the recognition of that which one hates, is apathetic towards, and despairs changing."²⁰ On this line of thought it hence does not matter whether one party imposes its will on another party and forces them to accept or recognise something as something, say, someone's property, or the government or ruler of a country, or whether the relevant parties give their acceptance or recognition freely and wholeheartedly. The relevant status functions come into existence in both cases and this is the main issue for Searle. As for Weber's definitions of social action and social relation, also for Searle's concept of 'acceptance or recognition' the ethical or moral quality of attitudes or motives that agents have with regard to each other, and thereby with regard to the relevant social entities or structures, is irrelevant. When it comes to the ontological foundations of social reality, ruthless exploitation and domination are as good as, say, mutual respect or brotherly love.

Whatever merits Weber's and Searle's accounts of the foundations of social reality have, they both share a deficiency: they are too undifferentiated to distinguish between what I called above 'antisocial' and 'social' or 'genuine' sociality, or in other words to distinguish between modes of 'sociality' that support or reproduce social relations and modes that corrode it. In other words, they do not distinguish between, on the one hand, the real foundations of sociality, and, on the other hand, phenomena that depend on these foundations and may even be parasitic of them. This means that these accounts are also too undifferentiated to be really useful for the theory and practice of social work.

Where should one turn then? What I will do next is to briefly reconstruct a robust and differentiated concept of sociality from some of the main elements of Axel Honneth's work in social philosophy. A central thought in this

18 John Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilisation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

19 Searle, *Making the Social World*, p. 8.

20 *Ibid.*

regard in his work is the thought that attitudes and relations of ‘recognition’ (*Anerkennung*) between persons are a central constituent of human sociality, or to use a term favoured by Honneth himself, of ‘social integration’. I have elsewhere suggested that the best way to understand the constitutive nature of attitudes and relations of recognition is to conceive them as non-reifying or non-instrumentalising attitudes and relations whereby persons relate to, or see, or ‘take’ each other *as persons* in concrete interaction.²¹ Following Honneth, there are three different recognitive attitudes between persons: *love*, *respect*, and a particular form of *esteem* which I will call *cooperative valuing*. Before discussing these, let me first thematise a certain unthematized ambivalence that is present throughout Honneth’s writings on recognition.

On the one hand, recognitive attitudes can be conceived of as ‘purely interpersonal’ in the sense of independent of social norms, principles or institutions: I love you or care for your well-being for your sake, no matter what the norms or conventions of our society say; I respect you for your capacity for judgment or your constitution as a rational being, independently or whether or not there are norms saying I should do so; and I esteem or feel grateful to you for what you have done for ends I personally value, regardless of whether or not it is a norm or principle in our society that one should generally appreciate people for their contributions. Such a purely intersubjective conception or recognition seems to be what Honneth mostly has in mind when he speaks of the intimate psychological significance of recognition for the recognisee, especially in the early interaction of the infant with its parents.²²

Yet on the other hand, Honneth also talks of ‘principles’ or norms of recognition prevailing in a society and determining who should be recognised, under what conditions and how.²³ The thought here is that the legitimacy of a

21 See: Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995; Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. On analysing recognition in terms of attitudes, see: Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, “Analysing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes Between Person”, in Bert van den Brink and David Owen, *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. On conceiving recognition in terms of ‘personifying’ attitudes, see: Heikki Ikäheimo, “Making the Best of What We Are: Recognition as an Ethical and Ontological Concept”, in Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher F. Zürn (eds.), *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham, Md.: Lexington books, 2010, pp. 343–367.

22 See especially: Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, Ch. 4.

23 See for example: Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003, p. 157: “principles of recognition that are considered legitimate by the members of the society themselves”.

society to a large extent depends on the extent that the norms or principles of recognition of a society are, as Honneth puts it, “considered legitimate by the members of the society themselves” and generally complied with.²⁴ On this line of thought, recognition is hence not a purely intersubjective response to the other person unmediated by norms and institutions, but on the contrary regulated by norms or principles of recognition that are institutionalised as the society’s particular ‘recognition order’.²⁵ Thought in this way, loving, respecting and having esteem thus become responsive *also* to institutionalised norms or principles—perhaps *causally* so that one is moved to recognition at least partly by the norms or principles of recognition that one acknowledges as valid, but in any case *normatively* responsive in that if one fails to appropriately recognise some people according to the principles, one is vulnerable to criticism in terms of them.

This however introduces a problem: the idea of regulating genuine attitudes of recognition by norms, rules or principles is namely arguably a contradiction in terms. On most accounts ‘loving’ someone *because one ought to* is not genuinely loving at all, and the same goes for respect and contributive valuing as attitudes of recognition.

It is not my intention to try to solve this problem here, but only to point out that there is a problem, and that these two lines of thought—the purely intersubjective and the institutionally mediated—involve two different general views on the constitutive significance of ‘recognition’ for sociality or social integration.²⁶ On the latter, *institutional* view the central issue is members of the society collectively accepting or acknowledging the norms of recognition of their society and living by them. On this picture, two different senses of ‘recognition’ are of importance. For social norms really to bind members and thus

24 *Ibid.*, p. 135 ff.

25 *Ibid.*

26 In my view this problem has so far not been clearly enough addressed by Honneth himself, and this has led to some lack of clarity in his picture of what exactly recognition is and what exactly is its constitutive role. I also suspect that at least part of the reason why Honneth was led to introduce a more “foundational”, purely intersubjective form of recognition between the infant and its mother or relevant other is that in writing this book he was in fact thinking of love, respect and esteem as bound by norms and hence not purely intersubjective and not foundational enough. One starting point for clarifying and perhaps solving the problem would be to distinguish between the “that” (i.e. ‘act’) and “what” (i.e. ‘content’) of recognition. For recognition to be genuine *that* one has it cannot be prescribed, but at least in the case of esteem *what* one esteems others for can be in various ways, if not prescribed, nevertheless affected or determined by social norms and value-patterns. See: Axel Honneth, *Reification, A New Look at an Old Idea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

to exist as norms, the members must *respect* their authorisers—in this case *each other*—as having authority on one. Let us call this *recognition as respect for someone as having authority on one*. But secondly, social norms establish ‘deontic statuses or roles’ consisting of entitlements or rights and responsibilities or duties: according to the norm p A is entitled to such and such and B has a duty or obligation corresponding to this entitlement.²⁷ If there are norms regulating appropriate recognition, then there will be people in roles where they are entitled to a particular kind of recognition, and correspondingly people in roles where they have the responsibility or duty to have this kind of recognition for the first mentioned people.²⁸ On this picture something like ‘recognition’ is actually involved in three positions:

- (1) A recognises or respects some relevant others as having authority on the norms of co-existence;
- (2) A recognises* or respects* B as having a right to something prescribed by the norms comprising of the society’s ‘recognition order’, namely to
- (3) recognition of some kind.

Let me make two remarks on this. Firstly, the ‘ground-level’ recognition (1) or respect for others as having authority on one constitutive of the bindingness of social norms on the other hand, and (2) recognition* or respect* for others as bearers of rights prescribed by the norms on the other hand are two different phenomena (hence the asterisk in the latter case). Whereas the attitude of recognition as respect is purely intersubjective, or independent of social norms (norms being dependent on recognition in this sense), recognition* or respect* is an institutionally mediated phenomenon in that it is a response to something that is there by virtue of the norms. Secondly, recognition has a paradoxical status in (3), since on the other hand it is something to which B is entitled and A thus obligated, yet on the other hand, as I pointed out, genuine intersubjective recognition—loving, respecting or having esteem for someone on Honneth’s model—out of obligation is a contradiction in terms.

Simply to bypass this unsolved tension in Honneth’s work, in what follows I will abstract from the idea of ‘recognition-orders’ or in other words norms and institutions prescribing recognition, and focus on the intersubjective attitudes of recognition thought of as foundational of human sociality. Though these are independent of social norms in the sense that they cannot be *prescribed*, it is

27 I borrow the term from John Searle, *Making the Social World*, *op. cit.*

28 This is of course compatible with the same individual, or all individuals, having both entitlements or rights and responsibilities or duties to recognition.

still a fact that they are something people *expect* from each other. Important in this respect is Honneth's repeated emphasis that the expectations of recognition are 'moral' expectations. I will next shortly reconstruct the three Honnethian attitudes of recognition in a way that cashes out this fundamental idea. Central to this reconstruction is not only that attitudes of recognition between persons are 'purely intersubjective' in the sense explained above, but also the idea that attitudes of recognition are 'personifying' attitudes, or ways of seeing or taking the other *as a person*.

Above I contrasted institutionally mediated or regulated respect* with purely intersubjective respect, but as I have already noted, on the Honnethian scheme respect is only one of the three intersubjective attitudes of recognition alongside with love and esteem or cooperative valuing. Starting with love, as a purely intersubjective and 'personifying' form of recognition it is experiencing (and thereby being motivated to treating) a person and his or her life as intrinsically or irreducibly important and valuable. Saying the same thing in other words, loving is caring about the well-being or happiness of a person for her sake, or grasping and treating her as an end in herself.²⁹ 'Caring' about the well-being of others can of course often be for selfish reasons, as when one takes their well-being to have instrumental value for oneself, yet loving as an attitude of recognition is not an instrumentalising or reifying, but on the contrary a personifying and thus genuinely social way of caring. As Honneth emphasises, the paradigmatic context of love are close personal relations such as those within a family, or between friends or 'lovers'.³⁰ Yet it is essential to see the significance of love or intrinsic concern also in social relations more broadly: it is a component of almost any normal human encounter or interaction. A baker who really does not have even the slightest hint of intrinsic concern for his customer is an extreme case the kinds of which we rarely meet in real life in civilised circumstances.³¹ Quite generally, if members of a community or society have very little or no intrinsic concern for each other's well-being (say, beyond the immediate sphere of family and friends), one can hardly call the community or society particularly strongly socially integrated. Furthermore, one party evidently having *merely* instrumental concern for another party's well-being is by default experienced as offensive by the latter, and such negative moral emotions are a

29 I am bypassing here a number of conceptual details. On these, see Heikki Ikäheimo, "Globalising Love: On the Nature and Scope of Love as a Form of Recognition", in *Res Publica*, Volume 18, Issue 1, pp. 11–24.

30 See: Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–107.

31 If the word 'love' sounds too romantic or brings to mind associations that are not helpful, one can simply replace it with 'intrinsic concern'. The phenomenon remains the same.

disintegrating force in the relationship. Though instrumental concern for well-being is better than no concern at all, and though it can unify individual goals in ways necessary or useful for cooperation, instrumental concern does not fully unite persons with each other *as persons*, which is what intrinsic concern does. It unites and integrates them only externally as it were.

Respect as a purely intersubjective form of recognition is experiencing (and thereby being motivated to treating) a person as a rational being capable of self-determination (or at least as one having potentials for developing such capacities), and thus as someone commanding authority on the norms or terms of interaction with her. It is taking her as a co-authority on the justification of activities that concern her, or in other words as a subject whose views and judgements cannot be ignored in actions and measures in which she participates, or which affect her.³² Treating a person capable of self-determination exclusively as a passive object of policy- or other measures, or ignoring her perspective on decisions that affect her, is a disrespectful and on this dimension reifying or non-personifying way of treating her. It is also 'anti-social' in that it triggers by default feelings of humiliation in the object-person, and this works as a disintegrating force within the relationship. Respect as a form of recognition is the defining virtue and central force of integration of a democratic form of social life. 'Democracy' does not here refer merely to state-level structures or procedures of political representation, but to all forms of human action and interaction that involve or influence more than one person.

It is important to note that though respect in this intersubjective sense does have a powerful presence in Honneth's writings, it is not clearly distinguished in them from what I called above respect* for someone as a bearer of rights.³³ Importantly, respecting* someone as a bearer of rights is perfectly compatible with having little or no respect for that person as autonomous in the sense of having authority on matters that concern her, including her rights. Individuals who merely respect* each other as bearers of rights, yet have little or no respect for each other as authorities on the norms or terms of their interaction do not take each other *fully as persons*. They relate to each other in a certain sense externally, and therefore do not form a collective or community that is genuinely socially integrated.

Esteem or *cooperative valuing* in the purely intersubjective sense is experiencing (and thereby being motivated to treating) a person as a partner in

32 I am drawing here also on Rainer Forst. See: Rainer Forst, "The basic Right to Justification: Toward a Constructivist Conception of Human Rights", in *Constellations*, Volume 6, No. 1, 1999, pp. 35–60.

33 See: Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–121.

cooperative efforts, as someone who contributes to some shared ends or is at least in principle capable and appropriately motivated to doing so. It is important to distinguish cooperative valuing from *instrumental* valuing. This distinction is not always completely clear in Honneth's writings, yet it is necessary to make if one wants to understand esteem or cooperative valuing as a *moral* attitude and expectations of it as *moral* expectations as Honneth does. An author can value his computer, a slave-owner his slave and a profit-seeking investor the labour-force of a company as useful instruments for his own purposes. But a computer is not for the author, a slave for the slave-owner, or a third world labour-force working in terrible conditions for the investor, a valued partner in cooperation. These relations are not personifying and thereby moral relations; hence they are also not genuinely social relations in the sense that I am after. The litmus-test of personifying, and thus moral and genuinely social cooperative valuing is *gratitude*. If Jack is grateful for Jill for her achievements, he does not value her (at least merely) instrumentally, but 'cooperatively'. Jack's cooperative valuing of Jill is thus a case of recognition, or in other words a case of valuing Jill *as a person* and not as an instrument or a thing.³⁴ Cooperative valuing or the gratitude that goes with it clearly integrates individuals socially in a stronger sense than mere instrumental valuing does. The latter, like merely instrumental concern for well-being, tends to be experienced as degrading by its object. However much they may be crowded out by other phenomena in the various contexts of social life (such as in the realm of paid labour), such experiences or feelings are a corrosive and thus anti-social force in social relations.

Honneth's guiding idea, one which I take to be sound and very fruitful, has been that the attitudes of recognition—love, respect and cooperative valuing—are a centrally important phenomenon for the constitution of the social world in two closely interrelated ways. On the one hand they are, as said, an essential element in what integrates societies or unites and socialises individuals so that they form a society or a collective in the first place. On the other hand, they are a more or less necessary condition for the development and maintenance of a healthy or harmonious self-identity. We develop into persons only in communities based on recognitive attitudes and relations, and such communities can only exist if the self-identities or personalities of their members are constituted in ways that make them possible.

On my account, the central thought in Honneth that recognition is a *moral* response to the other, and that expectations of recognition are therefore moral expectations, can be best cashed out by the idea that they are ways of taking

34 On gratitude and cooperative valuing, see Ikäheimo and Laitinen, "Esteem for Contributions to the Common Good", *op. cit.*

or seeing the other *as a person*—and this means *as* someone whose well-being has intrinsic importance, *as* someone who shares authority with one on the rules or norms of shared life, and/or *as* someone who has (or at least could have) something positive and gratitude-worthy to contribute to something one values. Being regarded in these “personifying” ways by others is essential for one’s capacity to relate to oneself in these ways and thus to *be* a psychologically integrated and flourishing person. As we know, it is especially hard for a child or adolescent to learn to love, respect or value herself without having experienced others having such attitudes towards one. But even in the life of adults experiencing a lack of love, respect or cooperative valuing in the ways in which others treat one can easily generate cynicism, powerless apathy, or destructive hate. Anti-social or in other words reifying or instrumentalising treatment has a strong tendency to cumulate and lead to social disintegration.

4 Social Work as Labour of Love, Respect and Cooperative Valuing

Let us now return to the field of social work. In the *Dictionary of Social Work* (*Sosiaalityön sanasto*) cited above social work is defined as “professional activity whose aim is the well-being of individuals and collectives and the prevention, diminishing and elimination of social problems”.³⁵ I find the definition useful as long as it is understood correctly. As health services can be understood consisting not only of prevention, diminishing and elimination of illness or of ‘health problems’, but also of *promotion of health*, also social work can be understood as consisting, not only of prevention, diminishing and elimination of ‘social problems’, but also of *promotion of sociality*.

One could indeed understand the promotion of conditions in which attitudes and relations of mutual love or intrinsic concern, respect and cooperative valuing can flourish, in which individuals have opportunities to experience

35 To be exact, this is the first definition of ‘social work’. The second definition refers to ‘social work’ as an academic discipline. According to it social work is “a branch of science that studies social problems, develops social work, and that is utilised in the education of social workers”. The dictionary also refers to the definition of social work by IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers): “The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.”

themselves as objects of love, respect and valuing, and in which they have psychological resources to have such attitudes towards others, as social work's central task. Thought so, social work is aimed, on the one hand, at promoting sociality, and, on the other hand, at preventing or diminishing social problems in the sense of lack of genuine sociality. Attitudes of recognition between persons that are the cornerstone of genuine sociality of course cannot be legislated (not merely because this would be undesirable but because it is a contradiction in terms), but they can certainly be facilitated.

What could this mean more concretely?³⁶ Something like the following: In the dimension of love or intrinsic concern social work is about protecting and promoting conditions in which individuals have opportunities to experience being loved and are likely to have resources for loving others, and thereby can experience their lives as meaningful and fulfilling. In this dimension the obvious field of social work are families, relations between adults and children and close personal relations between adults. What is at issue is fostering environments and resources that individuals need for building and up-keeping loving or caring relations in their lives. In the dimension of respect social work is about protecting and promoting social structures and conditions that are favourable for relations of mutual respect. By this I mean democratic structures and a democratic culture by virtue of which citizens, city dwellers, community members and service users can be, and can experience that they are, collectively in full control of their lives. In the dimension of cooperative valuing social work is about protecting and promoting conditions that have to be at place so that individuals can realise themselves in socially meaningful ways that can earn them each other's appreciation or gratitude, and so that they can psychically *afford* to appreciate each other in these ways.³⁷ What is at issue is the advancement and pluralisation of forms of collective action and promotion of resources for participating in them.

36 See also: Stan Houston, "Beyond Homo Economicus: Recognition, Self-Realisation, and Social Work", in *British Journal of Social Work*, 2010, 40, pp. 841–857.

37 Since the nineties, commercial television channels in Finland have pursued an intensive program of anti-sociality-education in the form of various survival- and zero-sum-game TV-formats, in which instrumental, manipulative and in this sense anti-social treatment of others is encouraged and awarded. When contexts of collective action are conceived of or construed as zero-sum-games, feeling grateful to others comes at great cost since it implies that one is dependent on them, and thus perhaps a 'loser'.

5 Social Innovations, What are They?

What are social innovations? I propose the following definition:

A social innovation is an innovation that promotes genuine sociality, or a culture, atmosphere and structures favourable for genuine sociality.

The demand for social innovations is as boundless as the fabric of social life itself. I will mention here only two examples of areas in which there is clearly an acute need for social innovations in the Finnish society especially.

First of all, exclusion from participation in meaningful cooperative activities is a serious social problem. An experience of not being able to find a place in the society as a person who is seen as having something positive to contribute to shared meaningful goals, or not having opportunities to show that one could do something useful, can be devastating. An element of this problem is the fact that collectively or socially valuable activities are too easily identified with wage labour, and activities taking place outside of it are too often underrated as mere hobbies or past-time. The problem seems especially pressing in Finland, partly for cultural reasons, partly for reasons to do with the structure of the labour market. Until very recently, Finland was practically a monocultural country where there was very little imaginative space for ways of being a respectable person beyond the fairly monolithic cultural norm which especially for men centrally prescribed participating in wage labour. The strongly regulated and very highly professionalised nature of the labour-market on its part tended to aggravate the difficulties of those excluded from the labour-market to find their way into the system—a situation familiar not only for people who after participating in wage-labour had become unemployed, but also for immigrants who both due to cultural prejudices and formal incompatibility of professional qualifications were simply against a wall in the Finnish labour-market. Increasing immigration and overall pluralisation of the Finnish cultural horizon, as well as deregulation of the labour market—the latter of course hardly an unproblematic phenomenon in other respects—is inevitably changing the situation, yet problems remain.

In short: Finnish notions of socially useful and meaningful activities still tend to be relatively narrow. This is an especially difficult problem for the long-term unemployed, pensioners, or people with disabilities, who have capacities and motivation to do something meaningful and worthy of appreciation by others, but who are excluded from the labour-market and thereby from generally acknowledged contexts of cooperative activity altogether. To change this situation, a thorough revision is first needed in views on what constitutes

a socially meaningful and useful activity worthy of appreciation or valuing by others.³⁸ Any innovations that help addressing this problem are social innovations.

Secondly, mere ‘toleration’ of difference is not enough in multicultural societies (which is what even Finland is slowly transforming into). Mere toleration is in fact *demeaning* to its objects, since it involves a negative value judgment: what is tolerated is not desirable or wanted, but something that has to be tolerated since it cannot be expelled or eliminated.³⁹ As long as relations between ethnic, religious or cultural groups are imbued with mere toleration but with little or no respect showing in everyday interaction and communication, these relations are in fact inflamed—even if the inflammation maybe buried deep underneath, only occasionally showing up in symptoms. Without a sufficient degree of mutual respect it is unrealistic to expect that cultural groups can co-exist in harmony, not to mention integrate with each other in mutually enriching ways. In the long run, sooner or later, bitterness, fear, hate and violence are likely to set in. Any innovations that help in eradicating cultural narrow-mindedness and xenophobia, and in promoting genuine communication and exchange of views between cultural groups are social innovations par excellence.⁴⁰

Needless to say, what we are talking about are broad societal issues that cannot be addressed by the means and resources of social work alone. Nevertheless, social work can function—if this is what we decide—as an institutional hub for the promotion of sociality, elimination of social problems, and development of social innovations. What this requires is intensive and unprejudiced

38 A simple definition of meaningful work could be: activity in which one realises oneself freely, contributing positively to aims valued by others and oneself. Needless to say, wage labour does not often live up to the definition.

39 If this sounds counter-intuitive, it helps to ask whether it would make sense to demand toleration for something that is generally considered as valuable or good. Goethe wrote: “Tolerance should be a temporary attitude only: it must lead to recognition. To tolerate means to insult”. See: Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “Maximen und Reflexionen”, in *Werke* 6, Frankfurt am Main Insel, 1981, p. 507. For more on this theme, see: Rainer Forst “‘To Tolerate Means to Insult’: Toleration, Recognition, and Emancipation”, in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds.), *Recognition and Power*, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–236.

40 Kati Turtiainen focuses on both problem-areas and provides more concrete conceptual tools for addressing them in the practice of social work in Kati Turtiainen, *Possibilities of Trust and Recognition Between Refugees and Authorities*, Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 451, University of Jyväskylä Publishing House, 2012.

cooperation of social work with all the relevant societal actors, as well as with multidisciplinary academic research.⁴¹

6 Conclusion

As the dream of forever growing material affluence in the European countries seems to be fading, a major rethinking and reimagining of the foundations of future European societies, and a serious attention at the broadly speaking moral foundations of social life and flourishing human existence is called for. As to social work as a branch of public services, the fact that there may be a diminishing pool of funding available in the future only increases the need to reflect on what the task-description of social work should be, and what, all things considered, is the wisest way to use the available resources. My suggestion is that something like the holistic approach sketched in this chapter, focused on strengthening genuine sociality and thereby promoting both social integration and psychological well-being, is likely to be the best way forward.

41 Petteri Niemi and Tuija Kotiranta have in recent years done pioneering work at University of Jyväskylä in establishing links of cooperation between social philosophy and the theory and practice of social work.

Dimensions of Freedom

Axel Honneth's Critique of Liberalism

Morten Raffnsøe-Møller

Is liberalism the best political defender and philosophical portrayer of individual freedom? And is liberalism's concept of social justice the best model for a society that furthers equal and maximal freedom? Indeed, it seems that during the last two decades—perhaps since 1989—liberal concepts of freedom and equality have gained a virtual monopoly in defining and defending individual freedom as the core value of modern society, regardless of the fact that liberalism's historical and ideological adversaries have attempted to challenge it; not by denying that individual freedom is a centrepiece in the modern normative order, but by criticising the narrow liberal understanding of freedom, and by trying to articulate an alternative vision of social justice.

On this background it seems particularly brave that Axel Honneth has launched a continuing and sustained critique of liberalism's social vision from *The Struggle for Recognition*, until his recent magnum opus *Das Recht der Freiheit*. His critique of liberalism and his alternative social vision have, however, only found their mature form in *Das Recht der Freiheit* and *The I in We*. Here it becomes clear that Honneth's critique of liberalism has three main targets: 1) Individual freedom (and more generally the good life) is defined in a non-social and non-political way in liberalism. Hence, individual freedom and self-realisation is connected to the realisation of, say, rational life plans or the good life, such that it disguises that individual autonomy cannot be acquired and exercised without also acquiring a social and political identity, which binds individual freedom to communal practices and institutions of freedom. 2) Because individual freedom is articulated in a non-social manner in liberalism, social justice becomes a social condition that must be upheld and constituted by the state amongst citizens. Conversely, to this Honneth argues that social justice is already instituted in the cooperative social processes in which individual freedom is realised. For this reason, the state is merely one among many instruments (and contexts) of social justice. 3) Liberalism insists that the legitimate principles of social justice must be those that individuals can ascribe to under rationalised conditions of contract or discourse between individual citizens. However, as individual freedom is always exercised in social

processes (like personal relations, the market and democratic will formation) in Honneth's model, these processes have internal criteria of justice, wherefore contract and discourse can only have derivative status relative to the social goods pursued in these social practices. In this article I will articulate Honneth's critique of liberalism's model of individual freedom and social justice. Furthermore, I will contrast it with his alternative model. I conclude that although Honneth's model is superior to the liberal model on a number of points, it is not only in need of a liberal corrective, it also needs to radicalise its vision of social freedom.

The article proceeds as follows. I first reconstruct Honneth's critique of liberalism in two steps, namely: a) his fundamental critique of liberalism's model of individual freedom (autonomy) and the equally fundamental picture of social justice; b) the resulting critique of liberalism's instruments of justice, namely distributive justice, contract, and state-centred justice. In the second step, Honneth's critique of liberalism will be put through a reality-check. I ask whether his picture of liberalism's fundamental concepts of individual freedom and social justice do justice to liberal doctrines from John Stuart Mill to John Rawls and Will Kymlicka. This is an important test, because liberalists have generally denied that their doctrines are insensitive to the social context(s) of individual freedom, and rather claimed that their theories better reflect and respect the many, diverse and conflicting social contexts and communities of freedom in the modern world. In the third step I develop Honneth's model of individual freedom and social justice. The main idea of this is that the exercise of individual freedom is connected to socialisation in communal, recognitive processes that are both practices and mediums of realising individual freedom. Hence, becoming an autonomous person integrates norms and self-identifications that are oriented towards larger social and political processes. In the concluding section I argue that Honneth's model, while being one of the most impressive attempts to work out a theory of justice based on a social theory of individual freedom, still fails on two accounts. On the one hand, it fails to fully appreciate the social importance of liberalism's concept of individual freedom (something that most often happens to liberalism itself, it must be admitted). This is so because he, in his (justified) eagerness to show that the liberal negative and reflective model of individual freedom is derivative, overlooks (or at least understates) the generative function of individual freedom in the generalisation and institutional expansion of freedom. On the other hand, Honneth does not take his ground-breaking theoretical development of social individual freedom far enough. The basic model of a 'sphere of social freedom'—a cooperative process of reciprocal human recognition and individualisation—is (in principle) applicable to all practices. Here, all

participants can recognise a dimension of common humanity and see each other as necessary for the realisation thereof. It is claimed that this is the case for a group of other social practices that supplement Honneth's (Hegelian) triadic structure of spheres.

1 Honneth's Critique of Liberalism as a Theory of Justice

1.1 *The Liberal Concept of Freedom*

Honneth's criticism of liberalism has, during the last twenty years, had two main thrusts.¹ One has been directed towards understanding individual freedom or autonomy, whereas the other has challenged its formal and abstract concept of social justice.² In *Das Recht der Freiheit* Honneth pulled these together in a formulation that will serve as the outset for the present interpretation.

The centrality of Honneth's critical stance towards liberalism is emphasised by two claims about the deficiencies of liberal understanding are made in the chapter "Transition: About the Idea of Democratic Ethical life". This chapter is meant as a transition from the first part, which establishes a historical and philosophical backdrop for the different concepts of individual freedom that have established themselves in the modern world, to the systematic part that reconstructs the different legitimate roles that such concepts have in and across our many social practices (as right and morality). However, this also includes the three social spheres of freedom (personal relationships, market society and democratic self-determination). The reason why liberalism functions as a major—negative—backdrop for this transition is expository. There are two main normative assumptions: that individual autonomy should only be determined in abstract individualised terms, with social relations as instrumental goods, and that social justice should be determined by applying general and abstract normative principles (of equality) to the social world. These are exactly the methodological pitfalls that Honneth wants to avoid in his establishment of a theory of social justice. Therefore, Honneth indirectly establishes

1 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995/1992; Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011.

2 Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010/2000; Axel Honneth, *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012/2010.

that his *Das Recht der Freiheit* model and liberalism can be understood as competing candidates for a theory of justice.³

The typical liberal approach is, according to Honneth, characterised by its normative concept of individual freedom and its normative application to social practices and institutions, determining whether freedom is fully exercised and equally distributed. From this normative point of view, liberalism also establishes rather progressive and effective criteria for social critique and progress (in the direction of more individual freedom and/or further equality). So, as a critical progressive doctrine, liberalism has also functioned as a force for equal possibilities and resources for freedom.⁴ However, as Honneth points out, “this theory does not say anything about how to bridge the gap between its normative demands and social reality”.⁵ Indeed, Honneth claims, it can easily happen that such theories “from the idealistic point of view construe principles of justice that have no traction in the recalcitrant reality of institutions and cultural practices”.⁶ By going so directly from normative theory to social practice, they proceed from the assumption that abstract equality is a measure for the very different forms that social justice takes in different practices and contexts. According to Honneth, the order of normative inference should be reversed. There are two reasons for this: all social practices and sub-systems have inherent goods and values that determine their social function and legitimacy. These (partial) values and goods should be reconstructed through a historico-critical reconstruction of practice, rather than being checked by norms or controlled from without.⁷ Furthermore, and more importantly: in the modern world, all major social practices and institutions are interpreted and legitimised with respect to two things. The first is the way they contribute to individual freedom, and the second how they do this equally for all participating subjects.⁸ An answer to the question concerning their contribution to social justice can therefore only be given from this perspective:

What ‘justice’ means and implies must be measured by the meaning and value of individual freedom has assumed relative to the function and meaning of this specific, differentiated action-sphere; there is no such

3 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

thing as the demand of justice, rather there are as many as there are sphere-relative applications of the concept of individual freedom.⁹

This line of thinking may best be illustrated by an example that is more Habermasian in origin. In public debate and collective will formation, equality or justice is not measured by the equal integration of all perspectives or arguments (relative to the intensity with which they are felt or the volume with which they are articulated), but rather by the resulting 'best argument' from a process in which all arguments are heard and weighed. Weighing all arguments equally (or relative to their numerical popularity) would indeed be the form of public injustice called 'populism'. Hence, if the relevant form of individual freedom is that of participating in rational, public debate, then its form of equality is that of equal participation and access. However, its form of *justice* is made up in weighing the arguments relative to validity and weight in the process of collective will formation. There are two points here: The relevant contribution to individual freedom can only be understood by reconstructing the contribution of this practice to individual freedom as participation in this communal practice and its cooperative goals. Furthermore, while justice amongst participants implies an idea of equality (of access or voice), social justice is considered relative to its cooperative aim (forming a rational opinion or will). This can be contrasted with an abstract application of the liberal principle of 'free and equal moral persons' to public discourse, as an idea of equal rights and time to voice one's opinion in public. From the point of view of the internal understanding of justice, demanding to speak in public by reference to one's equal right to do so, may indeed be a huge injustice, because it does not allow all weighty and important arguments sufficient space. The abstract application of principles of justice to all action spheres therefore risks ending in injustice.

Liberalism's second main problem is closely related to this. The example shows that individual freedom is closely associated intersubjective and even collective social practices, but also a cooperative pursuit of their internal goods and criteria of justice. This stands in contrast with liberalism's understanding of individual freedom in certain features of individual practice. According to Honneth, liberalism's two dominating interpretations of individual freedom are the models of negative and/or reflective freedom.¹⁰ Negative freedom sees individual freedom as the ability to, in a juridical space, with relevant material and cultural resources, to pursue one's individual and self-chosen ends

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

(free of sanctions based on social norms and conventions). Reflective freedom provides a range of 'internal' determinations of individual freedom ranging from the Kantian concept of rational self-legislation over Herderian ideas of self-expression, to more modern views.¹¹ For our purposes it is important to note, that social justice is determined instrumentally in the sense that justice is a question of the relevant and equal social 'enabling-conditions' for individual freedom. Indeed, this is especially the case from the point of view of liberal, individual freedom—whether negative or reflective. So, social justice is achieved by society providing equal resources, possibilities, and competencies for the individuals to perform the paradigmatic practices of negative and reflective freedom. Consequently, Honneth notes that in none of the two models "are the social conditions under which this practice of individual freedom is made possible understood as part of freedom itself".¹² However, as we have seen in the example above, the reverse is true in many social practices. Individual freedom and the individual good are closely, indeed often necessarily, related to the collaborative achievement of a social practice and its goal. My expression of individual freedom, as well as the level to which I consider it achieved, is internally connected to the cooperative interaction with others and the successful functioning of social processes.¹³ Furthermore, the value and the expression of individual freedom cannot in general be understood abstractly, rather they must be interpreted through an understanding of how their concrete aims, habits, norms, and roles imply a sphere specific conception of social justice. Therefore, it is in such practices that individuals learn what freedom is and under which criteria of just cooperation the good is achieved.¹⁴ This being said such action spheres are understood instrumentally from the point of view of liberal freedom: they are chances of individual freedom and opportunities of self-realisation, from the point of view of the individual's life plan. However, this implies the problematic assumption that such action spheres are 'just there' for the use and abuse of individual freedom, and that their overarching success or failure is of no relevance to the individual sense of self-realisation.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

13 Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

14 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

1.2 *The Liberal Concept of Justice*

I will return to a more thorough exposition of how and why individual freedom and the individual's experience of freedom and self-realisation are internally connected to social aims and cooperative processes. Also, I will take up how this is misrepresented by liberalism. However, in this section we will shortly review what Honneth takes to be the three most problematic features of the liberal concept of social justice. The argument can be seen as an extension of the above central problems. In *The I in We* these consequences are stated in their most concise form.¹⁵ Honneth criticises the dominant, liberal doctrines for their distributive, procedural, and state-centred conception of social justice. He therefore challenges the liberal claims that: 1) justice is fundamentally and exclusively about the equal distribution of a number of fundamental human goods (this is what Rawls famously coined as 'primary goods', i.e., the goods and all purposes means that any rational agent would have); 2) that the just distribution of such goods is best established through a procedure or contract that secures that the distribution can be considered both rational and fair amongst citizens; and 3) that the democratic state is the sole or overarching instrument of the establishment of social justice understood as the fair distribution of primary goods.¹⁶

The question remains why distributive justice, proceduralism, and statism are so wrong, if they allow social dimensions of individual freedom and secure its equal distribution? It is convenient to start out with distributivism as a first step in understanding Honneth's critique. Hence, Honneth claims: "these theories (...) can only articulate the question about a just social order as a question about the just distribution of fundamental [i.e., primary] goods".¹⁷

According to Honneth, however, this view rests on a hidden presupposition, namely that subjects between which primary goods are to be equally distributed, are *autonomous*. Hence, it is assumed that they are not only capable forming their own conception of the(ir) good, but they are also in possession of the relevant form of self-esteem to realise (and revise) it in the social practices and institutions of the relevant civil society. Yet, realising one's primary goods of, say, freedom of speech, political freedom, or freedom of contract,

15 See: Axel Honneth, "The Fabric of Justice: On the Limits of Contemporary Proceduralism", in *The I in We*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35–55.

16 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973/1971, pp. 11, 92 f.; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993; John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Harvard U.P. 2001; Axel Honneth, *The I in We*, *op. cit.*, pp. 36, 38 f.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

work and trade, are not distributive, but relational or social, matters. Having one's say in political debate, finding one's role, skills and worth in the social division of labour, one's self-trust as a member of a family are essential elements of realising the good for most people. However, these are not realised by distributive means, but by the sphere-relevant forms of social recognition, socialisation, and communal interaction (i.e., social freedom):

For a person to understand the disposal of money as presupposition for freedom at all, she must already have developed concepts of desirable or worth while goals, and to see career opportunities as ways in which to realise her own potentials, she must have learned and understood some of her potentials and talents as valuable and worth of realising. These necessary presuppositions [of autonomy] do not come in the form of fixed goods; they cannot be 'possessed' as 'objects', but must be laboriously earned in and through in and through relations to other persons.¹⁸

Therefore, Honneth surmises, justice is not primarily a concept of political institutions (although it is also this), but a pre-political phenomenon guiding and governing intersubjective practices and relations. Wherefore:

We cannot understand the content of justice [*das Material der Gerechtigkeit*] as divisible goods, but must rather be interpreted as reciprocal social relationships. Rather, such relations of recognition constitute historically emerged powers [*gewachsene Mächte*], that always influence us behind our backs; to be able to detach oneself from these, to evaluate them in view of totality, represents an equally empty, shallow illusion, as the aim to modulate and distribute them as we like.¹⁹

Thus, if we put all this together, social justice is best understood as social practices and interactions governed by relevant intersubjective relations of recognition in which individuals are socialised to understand themselves as members, contributors, and individuals with relevant status, qualities, and worth. If we are to get a relevant understanding as well as a normative conception of social justice, we must understand the implicit as well as the articulate norms and values of these historically emerged 'spheres of justice'. Honneth's thinking resonates Michael Walzer's idea that society is divided into a number of different historically and culturally developed spheres that are

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

characterised by each their own production, consumption, and distribution of singular social goods. Each sphere is governed by its own criteria and concept of equal distribution.²⁰ However, where Walzer registers up to 13 'spheres' of justice, whose statuses and interrelations are quite vague, Honneth only operates with three spheres, namely the spheres of personal relationships, of market society, and of the democratic public.²¹

Now, how can this be articulated more directly as a critique of liberalism in the more context- and socially sensitive vein we are considering here? We might begin by noting that, if we are to have a relevant concept of the rights and freedoms that a liberal society must consider and distribute in the personal, the market or the political spheres, it must develop a relevant conception of the social spheres they contribute to, and how these are 'allowances' for realising individual freedom in these spheres. Therefore, an equal distribution of economic resources in society is relevant insofar and to the extent that it enables social freedom in relevant spheres. Thus, understood from the distributive side, equality of economic resources in society, allows for relations of greater equality, free choice, and thus of a higher level of emotional self-realisation for all parties greater emotional intensity in the family. However, according to Honneth, this liberal point of view only allows us to understand justice in the family 'from without' (through the lens of, say, equality of opportunity or status). The family is a social form of freedom, structured through very specific emotional and normative relations that can only be considered just or unjust from the internal perspective of this sphere of freedom however. So, somebody understanding the family as a locus of (fair) transactions between autonomous individuals with the aim of maximising equally the preferences of all parties, of course has a concept of justice that he applies to the family. This being said, the relations that he establishes will be far from what most of us consider 'fair'. Thus questions of justice are indeed questions of equality, but equality must be understood as a 'contributive' good relative to the relevant sphere of freedom, rather than (and before it can be understood as) an intrinsic good of society in general.

The first aim of justice in society is thus socialisation in, and reproduction of recognitive relations and practices of social freedom, and the conceptions of justice and solidarity relative to these. Thus, individual autonomy is itself social in a specific way that is often overlooked—even in socially sensitive liberalism. Indeed, for "individual autonomy, to emerge and thrive, [it] requires

20 Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983. See also the interview in this volume for Honneth's remarks on Walzer's model.

21 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit.

reciprocal recognition between the subjects; we do not acquire it on our own, but in relations to others, that are willing to recognise us, and that we are at the same time able to recognise".²²

So, the proper understanding of distributive justice (and the goods it is supposed to distribute) presupposes a different and more fundamental form of justice, namely 'participational' or recognition justice at a more fundamental level. How about contractualism/proceduralism and statism, then? Now, contractualism and/or proceduralism is intended to be a way in which the participants (the individuals in liberal society) can establish a rational and neutral point of view from where all can agree to the fair principles governing societal interaction and resource-allocation. In Rawls it becomes clear how the contract-view of social justice is intimately connected to the idea of the non-social or non-political structure of individual freedom, and is understood as a way to establish a just and stable social order from that point of view. So, he suggests that from the standpoint of social justice, "each person holds two relevant positions: that of equal citizenship and that defined by his place in the distribution of income and wealth".²³ Consider the situation where these citizens are also parents planning for their children's (still open) future though. From the standpoint of a social conception of individual freedom, social justice must also involve their identities as parents and their aspirations for and participation in the future of their children and the society they will grow up in. This could be participation in, say, the school board or in grass root activities concerning the local environment. The conceptions of social goods, cooperative relations, and collective aims will enter into their struggle for establishment of a just society for their child. In the vocabulary of liberals like Rawls: If our rational life-plans are made from the (hopefully generalised and balanced) point of view of parents, employees/employers, football coaches, local residents, and so on, then our struggle for social justice must aim at changing the aims, relations, and possibilities in such social spheres together with the parties involved therein. On the one hand this means that the goods involved in such cooperative processes must continuously be articulated, reflected, and debated by the participants in the processes as part of the process, rather than established through a contract or a specific consensus- or neutrality generating procedure. On the other hand, where Rawls claims that we are primarily citizens and seekers of wellbeing, it seems that justice becomes an issue in all our social identities. Therefore, the only "instrument" of justice cannot be that of a constitutional and distributive state but rather all important processes of

²² Axel Honneth, *The I in We*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

²³ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

social cooperation and self-realisation. Hence, we need to understand how social justice is an issue that is already distributed and contested in a number of social contexts and communities:

we only need to think of a number of pre-state organisations, unions and associations, that promote the conditions of recognition in the name of justice: we might just think of communities of family related self-help groups, of labor unions, ecclesial communities or are the locus of such agencies of social justice. The structural paradigm of such pre-state, yet justice generating, agencies could be sought in the Hegelian corporations²⁴

To briefly summarise the main points: Liberalism models social justice on a picture of society as a locus of individuals that pursue a multiplicity of different life-plans, wherefore justice becomes a uniquely political matter. It thus promotes a statist and contractualist model of equality of rights and freedoms and state guaranteed (re-)distribution of resources and social possibilities. According to Honneth, this should be replaced by a specific and 'historical' model of the establishment of justice, in which distributive justice has an instrumental rather than constitutive role in the establishment of social justice.

2 Liberalism's Accommodation of Social Freedom

As Albrecht Wellmer has rightly noted, the best and the brightest in our political philosophical traditions are not divided into camps for or against individualist or communalist conceptions of human freedom; rather they differ in the way they modulate the interrelation or dialectic between communal and individual freedom.²⁵ This goes for the great figures of our tradition, like G.W.F. Hegel, Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville, as well as prominent contemporary figures of social and political philosophy, such as Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, Honneth, Kymlicka, and Joseph Raz. If this analysis is true, as I believe it is, the traditional distinction between political doctrines such as the liberal, socialist, social democratic, or conservative must be re-interpreted as different understandings of the relation between social and individual freedom; or

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁵ Albrecht Wellmer, "Models of Freedom in the Modern World", in *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 21, No. 1–2, 1989/1990; Albrecht Wellmer, *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998/1993.

maybe better: as different conceptions of the social infrastructure of individual freedom.²⁶ In recent times, Kymlicka has most explicitly addressed the social orientation of liberalism with respect to culture and has also tried to flesh out the consequences that this might have for the liberal doctrine in the most extensive way:

Liberals should be concerned with the fate of cultural structures, not because they have some moral status of their own, but because it's only through having a rich and secure cultural structure that people can become aware, in a vivid way, of the options available to them, and intelligently examine their value.²⁷

Moreover:

cultural membership is [still] a primary good, consideration of which is an important part of showing equal concern for individuals.²⁸

In light of this development, perhaps even convergence, in political philosophy, one could indeed see the evolution of the field since Rawls' theory as a gradual widening of liberalism's focus on social contexts and conditions for individual freedom (and its equal distribution). Indeed Rawls is very aware of the interrelatedness of individual freedom and social community. Thus, Rawls states that human freedom is best realised in social unions with different aims, but all more or less characterised a certain reciprocal form:

Different persons with similar or complementary capacities may cooperate so to speak in realising the common or matching nature (...) There must be an agreed scheme of conduct in which excellences and enjoyments of each are complementary to the good of all. Each can then take

26 For the social infrastructure of freedom see also: Charles Taylor, "Irreducible Social Goods", in *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 127–145; Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate", *op. cit.*, 1995, pp. 181–203.

27 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, p. 165.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

pleasure in the actions of the others as they jointly execute a plan acceptable to everyone.²⁹

As Rawls notes, liberalism is not hostile to social unions or strong forms of communal identification, rather its:

primary concern is that there are many types of social union and from the perspective of political justice we are not to try to rank them in value. Moreover, these unions have no definite size; they range from families and friendships to much larger associations³⁰

It is on this background that Rawls famously refers to the well-ordered, liberal society as a social union of social unions.³¹

To sum up: socially sensitive liberalism has included attention to the support and reproduction of social forms, societal culture, and political culture in the liberal doctrine. Such social institutions demand liberal protection to support plural possibilities into the repertoire of individual freedom (Raz), and to secure equal standing of individual freedom despite differences in cultural background (Kymlicka). Again, in the liberal camp, it is probably Kymlicka who fleshes out the social dimensions of individual freedom most extensively when he summarizes four proposed values of cultural membership for individual freedom, namely as providing: 1) a 'secured' and non-meritocratic identity; 2) additional meaning; 3) a locus of solidarity and trust; and 4) the extension of individual life towards an indefinite future and past (as part of cultural tradition).³²

Can Honneth's critique of liberalism be sustained on this background of a socially and culturally sensitive liberalism? It must be noted that Honneth often cites Raz' theory of social forms as an inspiration of his own, so his critique of liberalism does not regard any specific liberal theorist, but rather specific structural features within liberalism as we have seen in the preceding section. The first feature is the lack of attention to certain social institutions—personal relations, the family, market society and the democratic public—becoming recognised parts of and contributing to the universal (re-)production of specific dimensions of individual freedom. This means that these institutions are not just instruments of individual freedom, but also institutions in which

29 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 523, 526.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*, p. 527.

32 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, *op. cit.*, pp. 89 ff.

individual and social freedom are articulated and developed communally: in personal relationships our individuality and emotional being is recognised, developed, and realised, whereas our capacities, merits, and preferences are developed and exercised in labour and market society. These spheres therefore build and house essential and universally recognised dimensions of individual freedom.

It is an open question whether Kymlicka's concept of 'culture' is a sufficiently circumscribed activity so as to allow an ascription similar to the locus of realisation of an essential feature of individual freedom. Indeed, Kymlicka applies culture in two different ways: "societal culture" denotes a sphere encompassing all major social practices and institutions including the family, friendships, and the market. Indeed, at times he identifies societal culture with a liberal nation, understood as the totality of institutions of a self-determining, political community.³³ Elsewhere, when reiterating the advantages of cultural membership, Kymlicka seems to invoke a classical concept of culture as unity of language, traditions, and identities.³⁴ At first glance the second concept of culture seems to accommodate the values of membership more easily than the first. However, Kymlicka acknowledges that individual freedom in the family and in the market sphere are often exercised independently of, even contrary to, cultural membership, thereby creating individual bricolage biographies and 'cultures' in liberal society. This means that 'liberal individuals', on the one hand, often cannot enjoy 'secured identity', solidarity, or extension of identity in an indefinite future through culture, because both culture and belonging have become much more partial and plastic companions. On the other hand, if culture does indeed perform such functions for some individuals or groups, this must, from the liberal point of view, be treated on a par with other 'social forms' that secure the same functions—separately or together. This means that it is increasingly uncertain whether culture can or should provide such primary goods to individual freedom, secured identity, and self-esteem, meaning, futurity, and trust. It is furthermore also uncertain whether culture can acquire any privileged status, if it is merely one among several 'providers' of 'primary goods' that might be equally secured by a *mélange* of institutions such as the family, labour relations, civil society, and political community. It therefore becomes unclear whether, or in what way, culture is to be understood

33 Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Nationalism and Cosmopolitan Justice", in Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 128–146.

34 Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002.

as one of the social spheres reproducing and exercising an essential dimension of individual freedom.

The last point also supports Honneth's charge with respect to Kymlicka that liberalism's concept of social justice is 'statist'. It seems that, for Kymlicka, the question is what constitutional, legal, and political guarantees should be given to ethnic or national groups by political institutions on the basis of what primary goods culture provides. However, as Honneth suggests, our concept of political justice is dependent on the internal criteria of justice in a given sphere, and it is by no means clear what cultural justice or justice in the cultural sphere would mean.

3 Honneth's Theory of the Social Aim and Infrastructure of Freedom

Many modern liberal doctrines are, as we have seen, sensitive to the way that social practices and institutions function as enabling conditions and as contributory to the values and goals of individual freedom. Kymlicka lists a number of ways that participating in a cultural practice is contributory to the freedom of liberal individuals. It is exactly with these 'shared goods' in view that Kymlicka demands specific collective rights and recognition for national and ethnic minorities. At the same time Kymlicka retains Mill's model of individual (reflexive) freedom and emphasises that culture and community must be understood instrumentally in relation to individual freedom, even under the conditions of multinational citizenship. Collective rights and national recognition must be understood as contributing to 'enabling conditions' of individual freedom.

Does this mean that Honneth's critique of liberalism's understanding of freedom and more generally its concept of social freedom fails? To evaluate this question we must pursue Honneth's concept of social freedom further. The crucial question is whether a liberal, instrumental model of the social infrastructure of freedom can be retained, or whether Honneth can substantiate that his model of social freedom integrates certain collective processes and participatory identities directly in the model of individual freedom.

The example of discursive will formation that was already mentioned, gives us a hint of how such an argument could be wielded. Discursive will formation can be understood in at least three ways: first, public discourse can be a communal way to qualify rational self-determination and, therefore, an important instrument in the formation of individual wills. Thus, much like culture or arts, collective discursive will formation can be understood as an important enabling condition for the expressive self-articulations or formation of

democratic virtues of modern individuals.³⁵ Secondly, I can see my participation in public discourse as motivated primarily by communitarian identifications. The exercise of individual freedom and its possible success is here entirely dependent on the presupposition that ‘we’ all partake honestly and actively in the process of consensus oriented, rational will formation much along the procedural lines of Habermas’ discourse theory.³⁶ The aim is—through rational argumentation—to achieve consensus and hence contribute to rational, collective will formation. However, there is also a third interpretation of this activity, namely the one that sees it as an instrument of qualifying the individual opinions of the participants and as a way of achieving acceptable, rational will formation in a public sphere often marred by (rational) strife, but most importantly this collective activity is understood as a public extension of having a qualified opinion that allows it to have a communal dialogue on public matters. Being the participant in such a public opinion also means forming a very complex form of reflective freedom, since it (to a some extent) integrates often dissenting arguments, sensibilities, and interests, but also the knowledge thereof into one’s own will formation and participation in public dialogue.

This example illustrates Honneth’s basically Hegelian intuitions concerning the structure and practice of social freedom. Social freedom is a specific class of reflective freedom, namely individual freedom with intentions or directedness to “be-oneself-in the other”.³⁷ So, if we take public dialogue as an example, being free, means taking part in free public discourse. However, this exercise of one’s political freedom is only possible to the extent that one’s co-citizens enter into public dialogue with good intentions of forming a non-strategic common will. Consequently, I can only be fully free in my identity as a citizen, insofar as I: 1) express my convictions and interests honestly in public; 2) get them recognised and taken into account by other citizens; 3) we do this reciprocally; and 4) form a reasonable common opinion on the basis of this.

The fact that individual freedom can be realised in this inter-subjective fashion, however, presupposes three things: first, social freedom must have a certain ‘objective’ or institutional structure, for the participants to be able to reciprocate their interests. Therefore, democratic will formation presupposes certain public and recognised standards and normative expectations amongst

35 Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997; Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs Humanity*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012.

36 Jürgen Habermas: *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990/1983.

37 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., p. 85.

participants to function. As we saw, realising my citizenship in democratic will formation was not fulfilled by the mere fact of public dialogue, but rather by a certain shared understanding of the rules, aims, and values of this activity. This was primarily a non-strategic attitude of participants in the expression of the interests and arguments of the participants, and in the reciprocal acknowledgement of their relevance to public discourse:

In the final analysis, the subject is only 'free', if it faces a counterpart [*ein Gegenüber*] with which it is—within the framework of institutional practices—conjoined in reciprocal recognition, because it can catch sight of the realisation of its own goals. The formula 'being-oneself in the other' always includes a reference to social institutions, because only stabilised and learned practices secure that the participating subjects can recognise each other as each other's other.³⁸

Thus, Honneth's preferred forms of social freedom—personal relationships, market relations, and democratic citizenship—are only forms of social freedom insofar as the participants encounter a social practice, in which they have some common understanding of the practice, and especially of the reciprocal chances of freedom and self-realisation that this practice satisfies for the participating subjects.

Second, this also means that for social freedom to be stabilised and reproduced, it must be learned, i.e., subjects must learn the specific types of individual interests, normative expectations, rules, and common aims that are connected to such practices.³⁹ A striking example of the importance of socialisation of social freedom is the transformation of the role of financial institutions and the transactions that preceded the economic crisis. The deregulation of the financial sector and of the American mortgage market transformed the normative expectations, rules, collective aims, and practices of this field. Where the mortgage market could previously be understood as a market designed to supply relevant and competitive financing for housing for all participants, its deregulation and merger with investment banking transformed it into a market where lenders took loans to invest in housing with expected financial benefit of rising prices and were thereby transformed into investors. Consequently, the mortgage market became an investment market for the banking sector. This meant that socialisation into the mortgage market was transformed from an understanding of a common institution securing stable financing of all with

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

ability and need for self-owned housing, to a market where citizens invested in housing expecting economic gains. The first model is one in which the market is understood as a collective practice by which 'we' reciprocally secure our interest in self-ownership of housing, the second model is primarily based on the idea of a market, in which individual actors attempt to maximise their profits by taking (and pooling risks). The example shows that the socialisation into a sphere of social freedom assigns identities, aims, normative expectations, and the interests and actions of the other actors. Indeed, this socialisation can have both sound and pathological forms (but each in its way function through a specific interpretation of the individual freedom exercised therein).

Third, this shows that our conceptions of individual freedom and self-realisation are formed by and realised in such social institutions. It is in the family and in personal relationships that we learn to express our emotions, to reciprocate the feelings of others, share intimacy, or enjoy the depth and development of intimate relations, and reflectively pursue these as dimensions of our individual reflexive freedom. Therefore, our reflective reasoning over what is good in our life and generally of our free pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness presupposes institutionalised practices of intimate relationships, of market relations and of political citizenship that allow different 'rational life plans'. As we have seen in the example above, such institutions not only provide allow free pursuit of our interests and preferences, they also suggest what the aims and values of freedom should be relative to relevant social practices. They partly determine our 'normative identities' so to speak, since they involve us in cooperative processes that lay out collective interpretations of how such processes realise essential dimensions of free, ethical agency.

So social freedom is characterised as social, institutional processes, in which participants: 1) recognise each other reciprocally as both presuppositions of their own freedom and as equally meriting freedom; 2) are socialised into cooperative schemes where they develop relevant competencies, interactive schemes, normative expectations, and collective goals relevant to such an action sphere; and 3) are made aware of how these schemes contribute to their individual freedom and self-development. This description may, from a critical point of view look very much like a vicious circle: participants are socialised to certain system-conforming conceptions of participation and corresponding ideas of individual freedom and the good life. Consequently they may recognise any kind of self-undermining or self-mutilating cooperative scheme. This view is even corroborated by our example of mortgage market failure. The goal of economic growth, of excitement and risk became leading values in the American housing market were socialised as part of normal normative expectations and as contributing to the freedom of ordinary people.

Subsequently the housing market became locked in what we now know to be a self-undermining and catastrophic practice, while at the same time—until the catastrophe—reproducing a cooperative scheme in which all (potentially could) feel recognised and free in their participation.

Before answering why this is not a vicious circle, it may be noted that this model can explain how whole societies happily come to establish and reproduce such self-undermining practices. It is the socialisation to the warped goals and values of such a practice that make the participants believe that they participate freely and equally and indeed succeed in realising themselves therein. This is something that a liberal model will have a much harder time explaining, because it does not take socialisation and conformity to cooperative actions schemes and goals, but rather pluralism of values and life goals, as the necessary social starting point. This said, Honneth seems to outline two critical venues that block falling prey to the purely historicist and relativist idea that individual freedom and social justice are exactly what we at a given historical time and as a community are socialised to consider it to be.

Firstly, he seems to suggest the historicist-comparative idea that participants will only reproduce social systems over time insofar as they see them as expressing their freedom in a more adequate way than earlier systems. In this way an evaluation of the current mortgage market is actually always available through a comparison with how earlier versions expressed essential aspects of individual freedom.⁴⁰ Therefore, legitimisation of the current system is actually always partly dependent on a collective, historical, and reconstructive narrative of its superiority over earlier systems. A narrative that may be challenged, thereby reintroduces previous standards and goals.

Secondly, Honneth claims that the preferred liberal models of individual freedom have a corrective role in determining the legitimacy of a given recognitive order with respect to securing the freedom of the participants. Therefore, the reflective question of whether current practice really serves the relevant dimensions of self-realisation of the partaking individuals can be brought against its current form.⁴¹ Relative to an existing ethical institution, questions of whether it serves all and delivers relevant freedom equally, can have a corrective or parasitical status, and hence, gives rise the idea that “specific and normatively substantial institutions, that are therefore understood as ‘ethical’ [*sittliche*] institutions crave juridical recurrence, surveillance from the state or support from civil society; and feed the idea that only in a society in which there is a social interplay between of right, politics and social public debate,

40 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

can social institutions that reproduce different aspect of the freedom of the participants be kept alive and contribute to a whole culture of freedom".⁴² It is part of such a critical and freedom-oriented culture that both the rights to negative freedom and reflective freedom are used to challenge and transgress the existing institutions of recognition in favour of new ones that express social justice more adequately.⁴³ However, such demands for more freedom or social justice have a 'parasitic' role relative to the three major spheres of social freedom that Honneth distinguishes: personal relationships, market society, and democratic self-determination.⁴⁴

Consequently, social justice in a specific sphere must, following this combination of a genealogical and reflective reconstruction, be reconstructed in two ways. It must be shown, through a 'narrative', historical reconstruction of the sphere, how certain concepts of individual freedom, recognition, and cooperation have come to govern the practices of the sphere. Secondly, it must be shown how these practices contribute to certain dimensions of individual freedom and are realised through recognitive practices borne by communal norms that are oriented towards the universal realisation of the participants in the relevant sphere. It must also be shown how certain processes of '*Fehlentwicklung*' can be detected in certain spheres.⁴⁵ Honneth reconstructs market society as a sphere in which inter-subjective transactions of contracts, market goods, and trading labour are given normative value by the fact that they are seen as contributing equal opportunities to acquire goods at fair prices and getting a fair price relative to the intensity and merit of one's work.⁴⁶ These ideas, together with the idea that this system would provide the most efficient production of communal wealth, is denoted by Honneth as 'normative functionalism' concerning the market sphere—a position he attributes to Adam Smith, Hegel, and Karl Polanyi. This position actually demands that the participants limit their actions in ways that ensure the ability of the market in being such a cooperative community.⁴⁷ Being a market actor thus implies that the actors recognise concrete market transactions as part of a cooperative system in which participants try to satisfy each other's interests reciprocally. Hence, the failed development of the American mortgage market mirrored exactly the forgetfulness that this market was initially designed to supply all participants

42 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 233.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

46 *Ibid.*, 328.

47 *Ibid.*, 349.

with affordable housing through the provision of stable and transparent loans. According to Honneth, state measures regulating the transactions of the market, such as minimal wage or health and safety, are measures that are designed to further the implicit promises already immanent in the recognitive understanding of the market.

We can now better understand the three criticisms levelled at liberalism in the introduction: By neglecting the social institutions in which the essential ingredients of individual autonomy is actually socialised (and practiced), the liberal doctrine actually undermines its own core value—*autonomy*. Also, it overlooks the fact that the learning of autonomy thereby goes along with acquiring a social identity, by which one engages with the common reproduction of autonomy in social and institutional practice. This means that liberalism's primary model of society becomes a number of social forms or contexts that are instrumental to individual freedom, whereas Honneth sees individual freedom as primarily realised in three spheres of freedom, that at the same time are spheres of social justice. So, where liberalism takes 'the fact of reasonable pluralism' as *the* fact of modern social life, Honneth stresses that our participation in personal relationships, market society, and democratic self-rule actually shows that we engage in forms of social freedom that unite us around certain goods and forms of social justice (and the struggle over their practice and interpretation). Finally, this illustrates that the liberal picture of "political justice", as the principles of justice agreed to under idealised conditions, must be replaced by the interplay between individual, civic, and political activities that strive at reproducing, discussing, and developing the concepts and common understandings of individual and social freedom immanent in these institutions. Therefore, in the liberal sense of securing equal chances and resources political justice is thus merely a dimension of social justice, because social justice is concerned with reconstructing the 'ethical life', i.e., the norms, goal, and forms of interaction and cooperation necessary to ensure the institutions of social freedom.

4 Social Freedom Reconsidered

Having concluded and hopefully deepened our understanding of Honneth's critique of liberalism, let me make some concluding remarks concerning Honneth's core concept of *social freedom*. It is my claim that Honneth does not develop the full potential of his theory of social freedom and that there is a more generalised form of social freedom that needs to be considered. A short historical recollection will illustrate a form of social freedom that seems

to be overlooked in Honneth's model. If we, for instance, look at the French and American constitutions it seems fair to say, that they were the first political steps towards the establishment of societies based on Honneth's three spheres of social freedom: the private sphere, market society, and democratic self-rule. These political upheavals were of course an effect of social upheavals resulting from the economic reorganisation from the feudal to the market society, and the parallel transformation of the large household into nuclear families. It was only logical that the rising class of the bourgeoisie would reconfigure social and political institutions in ways that favoured their 'freedoms'. However, for our purposes, namely the excavation of a supplementary form and sphere of social freedom, it is important to understand that the modern revolutions were preceded by a third upheaval, namely a proliferation of 'human expressivism' in a number of forms: Paul Henri Thiry D'Holbach's reflections on 'the happiness of ordinary people'; Jean-Jacques Rousseau's reflections on individual fragility; vanity and authenticity; and the rising public interests in literary expressions of individual hardship, happiness, vanity, and reason in the French salons.⁴⁸ Here, a broad *culturally articulated and reproduced* repertoire of pictures and narratives of individual freedom, fragility, and wellbeing was developed. It had a rather direct programme of articulating the idea that we are always in pursuit of happiness, suffer hardship, become each other's neighbours, attempt to be reasonable or unreasonable beings, etc. Only from this point of view, that we all have a human life to live, can it be conceived why it was so important for the founding fathers to come up with a declaration concerning *human* freedom and rights (and not only citizen or class related privileges). The pre-revolutionary, French literary salons' discussion on human worth, love, fragility, happiness, and resonance in nature was extended and popularised by 'Sturm und Drang' and romanticism. This 'expressive humanism' has, over the last two centuries, been popularised by ever extending cultural spheres and mass media.⁴⁹ This contributed to a growing cultural repertoire articulating what it means to have humanity, pursue happiness, and to find oneself in nature.⁵⁰

48 The term is to be found in the works of Charles Taylor. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1979. A still valuable source of this development is: Jürgen Habermas: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989/1962.

49 Morten Raffnsøe-Møller, "Den humane vending i politikken" [The Human Turn in Politics], in Sverre Raffnsøe-Møller ed.), *Den humane vending [The Human Turn]*, Aarhus universitetsforlag (forthcoming, 2015).

50 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, *op. cit.*; Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, *op. cit.*

Now, is this practice an example of 'social freedom', in Honneth's sense? That is, do we recognise each other as each other's other, and are these practices constituted through socialisation and learning in ways that will allow us to practice an essential form of freedom? It seems so, since cultural practices are practices in which we realise our freedom as *articulate* beings. Articulation is constituted by complementary relations of articulation and reception or by reciprocal activities of common inquiry by interlocutors. So, cultural expressions of what it means to be human are to be seen and received by others. Inquiring into the human situation is therefore a communal enterprise. Thus, an 'expressivist humanist public' presupposes public sharing, as well as contributions by institutions such as the arts, sciences, and public education. It is of course debatable whether such a practice is all too dispersed, idealised, and vague to qualify as a sphere of social freedom, and also whether it is only derivative of the other spheres, as Honneth would probably argue. However, two things speak against this: On the one hand, this activity has its own institutional means of reproduction in the cultural, artistic, and literary public, as well as in our educational system. On the other hand, this social sphere has had an immense impact on the other spheres in its own right, for example through the human rights discourse. Thus Hans Joas sees this social imaginary as a backdrop for what he terms 'the sacralisation of the person' in Western society, extending the moral and institutional scope of human rights and equality.⁵¹ What I would term 'the sphere of cultural articulation and reproduction' is therefore the very process of learning and reflecting expressive individuality, i.e., our historical and expressive shared sensual and rational humanity. Expressive individuality is both a common resource for individual life plans and a common goal pursued in institutions like the arts and sciences. However, as the social imaginary of human rights shows, it can have enormous social and institutional impact. Thus, what Hegel placed in the realm of 'absolute spirit' as the artistic and religious self-expression of a common spirit, must be rephrased as elements of human spirit in recognitive terms and understood as articulated in cultural processes and central institutions of the modern world.

51 Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights*, Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013/2011.

Surplus of Indeterminacy

A Hegelian Critique of Neoliberalism

Arne Johan Vetlesen

G.W.F. Hegel defined modernity as the epoch where the principle of subjective freedom comes into its own. Yet the trajectory of this principle seems to have landed us in a situation Hegel, writing almost 200 years ago, could not have predicted: ‘the death of the subject’. Paradoxically, this death is said to come to pass not in an era dedicated to negating the principle of freedom, but in one priding itself on its realisation in all areas of life: the era of neoliberalism. Take the buzzwords ‘individual’ and ‘freedom’ away from this ideology, and its essence would appear all but lost.

How are we to make sense of this paradox? Can Hegel guide us, even though he addressed the prospects of subjective freedom in the heyday of philosophical modernism, an epoch now felt by many to be increasingly remote? In answering the question about the enduring relevance of Hegel, I shall defend Hegel’s understanding of freedom, and of the role of the state and of public institutions in particular, against objections put forward by Axel Honneth.

In exploring these questions concerning the state of the subject and that subject’s freedom, I shall take as my point of departure neither Hegel nor Honneth but the French philosopher Dany-Robert Dufour. My thesis is Dufour’s analysis helps highlight that Honneth goes wrong in his critique of Hegel precisely on the issue most relevant for the future of the welfare state, namely the absolutely crucial role of institutions as a bulwark against ongoing neoliberal reforms.

1 Desymbolisation

In his book *The Art of Shrinking of Heads*, Dany-Robert Dufour advances the following thesis: “We are currently witnessing the destruction of the double subject of modernity: the critical (Kantian) subject and the neurotic (Freudian) subject”.¹ Both are disappearing before our eyes and with astonishing rapidity.

1 Dany-Robert Dufour, *The Art of Shrinking Heads: On the New Servitude of the Liberated in the Age of Total Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008/2003, p. 2.

Far from being installed in some timeless transcendental position, safe from the vicissitudes of historical change, these two subjects are becoming fuzzy, their contours blurred. We are witnessing a subject-form so different from the previous one that its appearance on the scene compels us to ponder whether it spells nothing less radical than the 'death' of the subject as we have known it throughout modernity.

What is Dufour getting at when he offers this thesis? His emphasis—and in this lies his originality as well as an unacknowledged affinity to Hegel—is on the phenomenon he calls *desymbolisation*. He refers to the trait he finds most significant in the new capitalism, designated as neoliberalism: that "all those forms of exchange that have survived by reference to some absolute or meta-social guarantor" are being undone. People no longer refer to any transcendental values when they participate in social exchanges. We are now dealing with actors who "wish to be free from all ties and with nothing above them to hinder the maximisation of everything they do".² Dufour's claim is that exchanges are no longer valid insofar as they are guaranteed by some higher power (be it transcendental or ethical, divine or secular); instead they are valid by virtue of the direct relationship they establish as commodities. With the demise of all the transcendental figures that used to guarantee values, commodities that can be exchanged for their market value are the only things left. In the absence of any consideration—ethical, traditional, transcendent—to stand in the way of the 'free' circulation of commodities, what results is 'the desymbolisation of the world'.

This change leads to another: to a real anthropological mutation. The old subject is no longer needed when our predicament is no longer to come to terms with the transcendental symbolic values that act as guarantors, but instead is bound up with our ability to adapt to never-ending flows of circulating commodities. Neither Kant's morally autonomous and epistemically critical subject, nor Freud's happiness-seeking yet neurotic one, fit what is now required. They are replaced, contends Dufour, by "a being who can be plugged into anything and everything".³ Given the impact of ongoing desymbolisation, the critical subject who puts forward arguments constructed in the name of the moral imperative of freedom is "surplus to requirements".⁴ This also holds for the Freudian neurotic subject trapped in compulsive guilt because of the tormenting conflict between (especially sexual) desires on the one hand and the social norms, internalised in the form of the gratification-forbidding

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*

authority of the super-ego, on the other. What is required in the era of neoliberalism is “a precarious, acritical subject who displays psychotic tendencies”; a subject “open to all kinds of fluctuating tendencies and who is therefore ready to be plugged into every commodity”.⁵

Even though autonomy has overshadowed all rival values and competing standards of progress, there is nothing to indicate that this autonomy is something all subjects are capable of responding to from the outset. As Honneth observes, the ambivalence of autonomy in its contemporary societal *Gestalt* springs from autonomy’s having gone from being a *need*, something to aspire to, to becoming a *demand*, something to live up to; a demand now evolving into a mercilessly *categorical* imperative, measured against which every individual’s life is deemed a success or a failure.⁶

To appreciate the full consequences of this, we need to know more precisely what this so-called autonomous subject is. Dufour reminds us that the Latin for ‘subject’ is *subiectus*, denoting the status of someone who has been subjected or submitted. To what? In the various discourses on the subject in modernity, we find at the centre a figure in which the subject believes as though it were real: gods, devils, demons; or more recently, the State, the Nation or the Party—that is to say, figures who serve to guarantee the subject “a permanence, an origin, an end and an order”.⁷ Crucially, without that (sort of) Other, understood in its capacity as metasocial guarantor, it is difficult if not impossible for the subject to be a self. In short, the Other is “the agency through which a foundational authority is established for the subject”.⁸ The Other is a ‘there’, an external point that allows the foundation of a ‘here’, or an ‘interiority’, so that if I am to be here, the Other basically has to be there: “Unless I make that detour through the Other, I cannot know where I am, I cannot accede to the symbolic function and cannot construct any spatiality or temporality”.⁹ Historically, the tendency has been for the distance between subject and Other to decrease, as seen in the sequence from regarding *physis* in this capacity, moving to God, then to king, until, in modernity, there is (only) the intermundane—horizontal as opposed to vertical, if you like—distance between individual and collectivity in the republic. Dufour’s point is that, as we move through the epochs

5 *Ibid.*

6 Axel Honneth, “Organisierte Selbstverwirklichung: Paradoxien der Individualisierung”, in Axel Honneth (ed.), *Befreiung aus der Mündigkeit: Paradoxien des gegenwärtigen Kapitalismus*, Frankfurt am Main Campus Verlag, 2002, pp. 141–158, p. 152 ff.

7 Dany-Robert Dufour, *The Art of Shrinking Heads*, *op. cit.* p. 26.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

from one figure to the next, the distance between subject and Other—taken as source of authority, of meaning, identity and purpose—decreases. And now, with the transition to postmodernity, this distance is reduced to zero: it disappears altogether.

The modern subject—be it the Kantian critical subject or the Freudian neurotic—has broken down insofar as no figure of the Other has any real validity in postmodernity. There is, says Dufour, no Other that could impress today's younger generation. With the demise of the grand narratives (Lyotard), either in the form of monotheism, the national state or Marxism (communism), there appears today to be only one candidate left to fill the function of the Other: the Market. It is indeed the case that the market is made out to fill the place made vacant by so many compromised and failed Other(s), but Dufour is adamant that the 'Market' cannot function as a new Subject or Other:

Far from taking responsibility for the question of origins, of foundations, of the first element, that is to say, of the eminently Hegelian question of the human desire for the infinite, all it can do is bring every individual face to face with the torments of self-foundation.¹⁰

The market is unable to take responsibility for all personal and social bonds because it is not a symbolic economy; it is merely an 'economic economy'. It leaves the subject to his own devices when it comes to the most important thing of all: founding himself. If not dealt with, the question of origin will not simply disappear or lose importance; instead it will return with a vengeance, in the form of intolerable and irrepressible torment.

Against this background, it comes as no surprise that mental illness takes on new forms in a society where the Market serves as a *de facto* replacement of, or stand-in for, all previous figures in the sense of Dufour's Other. But what are the novel forms of mental illness that so preoccupy Dufour? To begin with, he notes a shift from guilt to shame: from the neurotic subject tormented by compulsive guilt vis-à-vis an Other whose demands are always disappointed, to a highly precarious subject that oscillates between feelings of omnipotence when succeeding and complete impotence when failing. Referring to sociologist Alain Ehrenberg's seminal study *La Fatigue d'être soi*, being ashamed (of oneself) has replaced guilt (vis-à-vis others). Whereas guilt could not be overcome without a prolonged symbolic effort involving introspection, shame requires a rapid remission: "I am ashamed in the same way I am hungry or cold. In that sense, shame is an expression of a narcissistic intolerance of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

frustration".¹¹ Recall that Freud's super-ego, as intrapsychic instance, is formed through the introjection of ego-ideals. When ego-ideals collapse, the sociogenesis of the super-ego breaks down because it has nothing to feed on. Excluded from the feeling of guilt which can only operate through having committed oneself to ego-ideals, this subject no longer sees itself as having to justify—in the Kantian-Freudian, metaphysical-moral sense—his behaviour.

With the collapse of the interconnected super-ego and ego-ideals comes the weakening of the critical spirit. The empty space left by this double (or triple) collapse is eagerly seized upon by the market, especially in advertising tailor-made for the young: exploiting the absence of the symbolic aspect of the super-ego, advertisers employ a number of techniques to make sure that brands become the new symbolic markers of young children. "The market", observes Dufour, "has become a major supplier of new and volatile ego-ideals which are constantly being reshaped".¹² He cites studies of children showing that many of them have yet to get beyond an 'I' that is imbricated in personal experience; such children cannot decentre themselves and "cannot establish any agency that exists independently of their actions".¹³ Though ideologically proclaimed free in the sense of having been 'liberated' from the constraints of collective structures and the authorities that go with them, this new individual is abandoned rather than free. It is easy prey to whatever appears to satisfy its immediate needs and to a comprehensive repertoire of market-offered identities and commercial brands, the latter now designed to evoke and to help connect with existential concerns and values, so that wearing the brand in question communicates your whole 'personal' lifestyle and vision (Nike).

Dufour gives a provocative account of the ways in which the ascendancy of this new subject plays out in such vital cultural domains as education and the relationship between the sexes. A major point is that the fundamental asymmetry between the generations is now perceived as intolerable, be it at school between teacher and pupil, or in the family between parent and child. Setting tasks the pupil or child is not inclined to perform, presenting a subject or introducing an activity that appears difficult or alien—everything on the part of the adult that would manifest asymmetry toward the child is condemned as 'authoritarian' or 'old-fashioned'. When learning becomes doing, when everyone has a right to his opinion and when all opinions are deemed equally valid in a complete 'democratisation' of education, the result is that there is no longer one generation educating the next. Even in the universities, to demand

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹³ *Ibid.*, fn. 64.

that students learn to think in Kant's critical sense is seen as exerting a form of social violence; or simply making the mistake of expecting the impossible. The important thing is to keep the students entertained and amused, and not for a moment to "remove them from the communicative sensation-stimulus matrix of texting, YouTube and fastfood, to deny them, for a moment, the constant flow of sugary gratification on demand", to quote Mark Fisher, speaking from his experience as a college teacher.¹⁴ The levelling between generations renders all adult-child relationships one between 'equals'. The consequence, warns Dufour, is that the young come to see themselves as non-generated, as owing nothing to the previous generation. We are witnessing "the invention of the first non-generated generation".¹⁵

2 Deinstitutionalisation

I consider two points to be particularly important for appreciating the way in which Dufour's analysis of the constellation subject-freedom is intriguing when considered from a Hegelian perspective. The first concerns the role of institutions in the account he offers, especially that of the state. Here, his thesis is that

the great novelty of neoliberalism, as compared with earlier systems of domination, is that the early systems worked through institutional controls, reinforcement and repression, whereas the new capitalism runs on deinstitutionalisation.¹⁶

This is a crucial claim and a lot hangs on its persuasiveness. If correct, it means that the most influential intellectuals on the French left during the last three or four decades, namely Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, got the target of their critique fundamentally wrong. Focusing on the key institutions developed by the modern state, such as the prison, the hospital and the asylum, Foucault identified such principal sites of domination precisely at the historical moment when their qualities as so many disciplinary societies were lapsing into decadence: Foucault's critical object had in fact become "very fragile even

14 Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is there No Alternative?* Winchester: O Books, 2009, pp. 23 f.

15 Dany-Robert Dufour, *The Art of Shrinking Heads*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

as he was studying it".¹⁷ What Foucault and his numerous followers, whether intellectuals or militant activists or both, failed to realise was that the institutions they accused of repressing and disciplining their subjects, were the very apparatuses "that the most aggressive fraction of capitalism wished to destroy".¹⁸ What was lost on Foucault, though he recognised it in some of his analyses of the novel forms of 'self-technologies', is that the new capitalism, by exploiting the cry for individual liberation that was the spirit of 1968, since the 1970s has developed ways of guaranteeing its own success that are much less (overtly) coercive than what Foucault lets us expect: "it is no longer reinforcing the secondary domination which has produced submissive subjects".¹⁹ Rather, the new capitalism in the guise of neoliberalism is bent on *destroying* institutions, putting an end to primal domination in such a way as to "produce individuals who are supple, insecure, mobile and open to all the market's modes and variations".²⁰

Dufour's criticism of Foucault overlooks the fact that the result of the marketisation of public services is "a crazed proliferation of bureaucracy, via target setting, league tables, performance reviews, etc.". ²¹ But his point is a different one, and one that I think holds water: The demise of the series of 'Other(s)' who used to command respect and to provide sources of meaning and direction from a position of (non-symmetric) authority, paves the way for a novel type of imperative, one without rivals: that commodities must circulate. And the commodity that each subject is appointed responsible—solely so—for circulating in a successful manner, is the subject him- or herself: treat yourself like a commodity for which there is market demand, or perish. Domination here turns into a wholly intra-subjective process from which there is no escape: exploiter and exploited are one and the same, the postmodern 'I' anxious to appear attractive in so many social arenas that have each been turned into a market, forcing every participant to adapt the presented self and its performance according to the laws of competition, supply and demand. In this sense, Dufour is right to claim that portraying the big institutions of the state and in the public sector—in particular, the school and higher education—as sites of repression and disciplining is to miss what is crucial about how domination operates on the postmodern subject: it precisely does not operate *on* him or her, as if from above or outside; it operates *within* the subject (as Foucault

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²¹ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40 ff.

realised). Accordingly, the standard methods as well as institutions of domination industrial-capitalist style have become redundant. And the more intensively this new subject works on itself to enhance market value—as witnessed in a whole series of new ‘performance-enhancing’ techniques and professions, varying from cosmetic surgery to spa and personal coaches (beginning as options you are ‘free’ to make use of, yet before you know it made into options you cannot choose not to make use of, unless you ‘choose’ to be a loser in the rat race)—the more exhausted in Ehrenberg’s sense of depression will that subject be. As Honneth observes, such a subject comes to “experience all of his desires and intentions as arbitrarily manipulable things”, as so many personal assets to be sold at the marketplace; think of the job interview where the applicant’s projected, future-oriented personality profile counts for more than his or her record of previous work experience.²²

This brings me to the second point I see as intriguing from a Hegelian point of view—namely, the exact way in which Dufour holds deinstitutionalisation to bring about a desymbolisation of individuals. Indeed, the new capitalism’s “new target is the primal core of humanity, or the person’s symbolic dependency”.²³ Desymbolisation seeks to “eradicate the cultural component in exchanges, because that is always specific”.²⁴ Let us appreciate the force of Dufour’s thesis by quoting the central passage in full:

Desymbolization refers to a process designed to rid symbolic exchange of that which is in excess of them and which at the same time institutes them: their foundations. Human exchanges are in fact framed by a body of rules whose principle is not ‘real’; it refers to ‘values’ which are postulated. Those values derive from a culture (a repository of moral principles, aesthetic canons, models of truth, and so on) and, as such, can differ from, or even come into conflict with, other values. Now ‘the new spirit of capitalism’ is pursuing an ideal of fluidity, transparency, circulation and renewal which cannot be reconciled with the historical weight of these cultural values. In that sense, the adjective ‘liberal’ describes the condition of a man who has been ‘liberated’ from all ties with values.²⁵

22 Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007/2005, p. 83.

23 Dany-Robert Dufour, *The Art of Shrinking Heads*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Dufour's diagnosis invites many questions and quite a few objections. Is Dufour exaggerating? Can one really say that today's individual has been "liberated" from all ties with values"?²⁶ If so, what would such a situation mean, short of nihilism and anomie?

To assess the validity of Dufour's diagnosis, consider the present situation in the United States. If anything, *values* seem to be invoked more frequently than ever in recent memory, not less. 'Culture wars' have eclipsed any sane discourse about the economy, about the importance of class and material interests in Marx' sense.²⁷ Conflict is organised around 'value differences' that are taken to go personally deeper and to be more politically explosive than differences—inequalities—of economic-material kind.²⁸ Presidential elections are perceived by the majority of the electorate to be all about irreducibly value-laden issues to do with patriotism and religion, abortion and sexuality. Diverting attention and politically volatile frustration away from the economy and onto the cultural sphere is a specialty of the American right in general and the Tea Party in particular; a shrewd way of leaving the ultrarich one percent in peace.²⁹ But the radical left has in fact played no less an important part in shifting political discourse from base to superstructure, as testified in the 'politics of identity' and in the rhetoric of self-realisation and authenticity that started out as a prerogative of the left in the wake of 1968, only to be coopted by market forces bent on exploiting the cry for 'liberation' for all it was commercially worth.³⁰

The story of how what was meant to overthrow existing capitalist power structures was turned into consolidating them instead has been told many times and bears no repeating. For my purposes, the question is: Does this weaken Dufour's double thesis of deinstitutionalisation and desymbolisation? Let us turn to Hegel to explore this question.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

27 Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, London: Secker and Warburg, 2004.

28 C. Fred Alford, *Rethinking Freedom: Why Freedom has Lost its Meaning and What Can be Done to Save It*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

29 Thomas Frank, *Pity the Billionaire: The Hard-Times Swindle and the Unlikely Comeback of the Right*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012.

30 Thomas Frank, *One Market under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy*, London: Secker and Warburg, 2001; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

3 Too Little Social Structuring?

A long-standing concern of Hegel's was that *too little social structuring* of individual possibilities and expectations would frustrate the aim of subjective freedom, and so undermine the promise of modernity. Depending on the circumstances, too little structuring may lead to one or the other of the social pathologies Émile Durkheim theorised: anomy or egoism. Hegel was concerned that for lack of support from stable structures outside itself, the individual would be thrown back upon itself, causing a state of loneliness, emptiness and depression. Freedom is no purely individual matter. Nor is its actual realisation a matter purely of rights, of achieving a certain legal status. Freedom remains void if content does not complement and stabilise form. Such content cannot be provided by the individual on its own and purely by its own devices. Short of a content with which the individual's will can engage itself, a content that is itself rational, freedom is merely formal. The structures in which the individual finds itself participating need to be of such a nature as to provide its freedom of will with *direction*, a specific direction at that. Such specificity must, according to Hegel, be present in the structures themselves: far from being up to the individual to create or to decide qua separate individual, the specificity of direction *awaits* each new participant as so many duties and rights, so many tasks, corresponding with a particular social role. In Hegel, this notion is borne out in his account of *corporations*. Here, membership is tied up with profession, meaning that each new participant learns what is expected of him in what sort of circumstances according to objective not subjective criteria; that is to say, according to standards of excellence transmitted down the generations of practitioners of the profession in question, be it carpenters, teachers or doctors. Questions concerning good and bad performance, concerning the why and the how of the task at hand and the role to be filled, are precisely not for each participant to decide. That would be a totally misplaced individualism; it would be to let arbitrariness and contingency reign in a domain that would quickly be ruined by them. Rather, a whole code of conduct corresponds with the function at hand; and while there is a certain room for manoeuvre, allowing one teacher, say, to develop a style somewhat different from that of her colleague, she is not 'free' to decide matters of content or the criteria of evaluation: these are genuinely intersubjective concerns, evolving collectively and historically in the course of generations of practitioners. Moreover, content and criteria need to be those—and precisely those—that *pertain* to the profession and to the task at hand; they emerge out of the substantial distinctness (*Eigenart*) of the latter and cannot—must not—be imposed on it from outside.

Hegel's characteristic way of making this point would be to say that for a teacher to decide for herself the what, the why and the how of her role and her function, would not mean for her to be free: it would mean the very opposite; and besides, it would help ruin the practice in question, understood as something objective, not subjective, that she partakes in. For lack of transmitted standards of excellence, of always-already established, experience-based and consensus-enjoying criteria of performance to lean on and from which to receive direction, she would be helpless in her endeavour to perform well. The latter, that is, cannot be separated from *knowing* what is expected of her, knowing it with a high degree of substantial, not merely formal, precision. At its most basic level, receiving direction is what endows the activity one undertakes with its meaning: what makes it carry *sense*, understood the Hegelian way as sense not for a separate agent but for all involved.

To be unfree, for Hegel, is to be in a state of directionlessness. This being so, to be unfree is not first and foremost, say, a legal or political matter; one of status within a hierarchy, with others at the top, oneself at the bottom. Of course, to be a servant or a slave is bad enough, and something Hegel condemns. Yet his peculiar notion of the contrast between freedom and unfreedom addresses not what is formal but what is experiential: to be in a state of directionlessness is to be in danger, clinically so, existentially so. It is to *suffer from indeterminacy*. Such indeterminacy may prevail and indeed thrive precisely in a society hailing 'individual freedom' as the value to trump all others; freedom understood (Hegel: misunderstood) as that to which everyone is entitled and with which no one else may interfere: as though freedom were such a precarious entity—a private property—as to be spoiled once affected by others.

Hegel's worry concerning freedom's predicament in modern society is the very opposite of the worry we are used to hearing: that there is too much social structuring, this being viewed as no minor fault but fear as evolving into downright totalitarianism and so the ruin of everything to do with freedom. What would 'too much social structuring' amount to, more precisely? Probably something along the following lines: the individual is robbed of a real say in matters of what to do and how to do it; the aims of freedom, its direction and how to make sure to move in it—all these issues are decided not by the individual but *for* the individual. In a situation of 'too much structuring', then, the expectations and duties addressing the concrete individual from the institutions leave what is felt to be too little room for manoeuvre, for initiative, for making a difference and attaching a unique signature to his contribution.

In assessing Hegel's position, it is important to recall how fundamentally it differs from the liberal one just alluded to. Not the pursuit of the individual's private ends, but the pursuit of a universal or collective (shared) end, is what

Hegel sees as actualising their freedom and having the most value for them. A 'liberal' state in Hegel's sense is one that has no universal, collective goals and that prides itself on not having them; this 'external' state is an 'artificial' entity (Thomas Hobbes), an instrument, existing only to serve the interests and desires of its individual members, to make sure, that is, that they are free to conceive of and practically pursue their own goals without interference from those chosen by others. For all their personal, subjective, and civil freedoms, the members of the liberal state are viewed by Hegel as fundamentally *unfree*.

It is crucial that Hegel not be misunderstood on this point. He is not denying the paramount significance of subjective freedom in the modern era. What he is getting at is the absolutely indispensable role of the state as the condition of possibility for the actualisation of subjective freedom: the state helps actualise subjective freedom "not in accordance with subjective caprice, but in accordance with the concept of the will, i.e., in accordance with its universality and divinity".³¹ Whereas liberals typically regard the state as a threat to the particular individual's freedom, as stifling or crushing individuality—uniqueness—wherever met (John Stuart Mill's classic argument in *On Liberty* springs to mind), Hegel insists that the point is to recognise the complementarity and interconnectedness of the moments—individual and state—taken to be in conflict:

The essence of the modern state is that the universal should be linked with the complete freedom of particularity [*Besonderheit*] and the well-being of individuals, and hence that the interest of the family and of civil society must become focused on the state; but the universality of the end cannot make further progress without the personal [*eigene*] knowledge and volition of the particular individuals, who must retain their rights. Thus, the universal must be activated, but subjectivity on the other hand must be developed as a living whole. Only when both moments are present in full measure can the state be regarded as articulated and truly realised.³²

The correlation between rights and duties as well as their performative balancing must also be seen this perspective, argues Hegel:

³¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991/1821, § 260, Addition.

³² *Ibid.*

The association of duty and right has a dual aspect, in that what the state requires as a duty should also in an immediate sense be the right of individuals, for it is nothing more than the organisation of the concept of freedom. The determinations of the will of the individual acquire an objective existence through the state, and it is only through the state that they attain their truth and actualisation. The state is the sole precondition of the attainment of particular ends and welfare.³³

In order to achieve ‘determinate particularity’, the individual’s activities must be specifically recognised as part of society’s ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). The individuals’ social position must be a definitive vocation, profession, or trade; and to achieve public recognisability, the trades must organise themselves as corporations. The most important function of a corporation in Hegel’s definition is to provide its members with ‘ethical goals’:

If the individual is not a member of a legally recognised corporation (...) he is without the honour of belonging to an estate, his isolation reduces him to the selfish aspect of his trade, and his livelihood and satisfaction lack stability. He will accordingly try to gain recognition through the external manifestations of success in his trade, and these are without limit [*unbegrenzt*], because it is impossible for him to live in a way appropriate to his estate if his estate does not exist.³⁴

Although in providing for himself, in seeking his individually conceived ends as a private individual in civil society, the individual is also acting for others (recall Adam Smith’s notion of the invisible hand), this is not enough: it stops short of allowing the individual to become what—who—he can become; indeed, when confined to a ‘private’ existence as opposed to an ethical one, the individual cannot actualise freedom precisely as *his*, as subjective freedom. This is the core of Hegel’s critique of the liberal state as a legal instrument to protect the individual’s right to life, freedom and property, what Hegel terms ‘the external state’ as distinguished from the organic one: precisely for the sake of making possible the realisation of subjective freedom, says Hegel, “it is necessary to provide ethical man with a universal activity in addition to his private end”.³⁵ Specifically, Hegel warns against regarding the union of individuals within the state as a *contract*, and so “based on their arbitrary will and

33 *Ibid.*, § 261, Addition.

34 *Ibid.*, § 253.

35 *Ibid.*, § 255, Addition.

opinions, and on their express consent given at their own discretion”.³⁶ The ‘contingencies’ of want, need of protection, strength, wealth, *etc.*, must not be seen as, and so confused with, the substance of the state, but instead as moments of historical development.

We noted that a key function of the corporation is to provide content for each individual member’s aspiration for freedom. Content is provided by giving a specific direction to the performance expected of a particular member; that is to say, by making sure that the what, why and how peculiar to that performance are settled by the individual’s being committed to certain standards of excellence, i.e., the standards characteristic of a certain profession, handed down through generations of practitioners, as we mentioned above. In sum, the elements listed here amount to what Hegel designates as *determinacy* (*Bestimmtheit*), as distinguished from indeterminacy, of a particular individual’s social position. Hegel’s thesis is that for lack of such determinacy, the individual will be unfree instead of free; and as concrete, as lived, such unfreedom entails *suffering* in a clinical sense. Recalling the diagnosis of contemporary society presented by Dufour, the latter aspect of Hegel’s thesis commands special attention in what follows. For it would appear that Hegel, writing almost two hundred years ago, to a large measure anticipated Dufour’s worries.

4 Honneth’s Critique of Hegel

To assess the fruitfulness of Hegel’s position for present-day social analysis, consider the following objection put forward by Axel Honneth. There is reason to be sceptical, writes Honneth,

when we look at the passages where Hegel depicts the social praxes within the spheres of the state, because here the subordination of the individual under the authority of the state seems to repress the communicative actions.³⁷

Honneth argues that in the last main part of his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel

³⁶ *Ibid.*, § 258.

³⁷ Axel Honneth, “Pathologien der individuellen Freiheit: Hegels Zeitdiagnose und die Gegenwart”, in Jörg Huber (ed.), *Darstellung: Korrespondenz*, Zürich: Institut für Theorie der Gestaltung und Kunst Zürich, 2000, p. 232 (my translation). See also: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011, p. 471.

ends up with an exaggerated degree of determinacy, because he only conceives of the communicative character of freedom in the form of a context of order [*Ordnungszusammenhang*] within already established institutions.³⁸

The last part of Honneth's criticism seems to suggest that Hegel is too conservative, that he does not allow enough room for the emergence of new social formations, and so for the individual's part in initiating something truly novel (to allude to Hannah Arendt's notion of natality). However, I do not think this captures the essence of what Honneth is objecting too. Let me put the question like this: Is the gist of Honneth's criticism that Hegel lets 'already established' institutions constitute the framework within which freedom has to actualise itself? Or is it that the role Hegel ascribes to *institutions*—be they old or new, existing or not yet so—is exaggerated?

I consider the latter reading of the objection more basic than the former, and I believe this is how Honneth should be interpreted. In his book *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, Honneth aims to show why a reactualisation of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* today is a worthwhile undertaking. Honneth accepts Hegel's central claim that, when seeking to identify the causes of current social pathologies, we must look at the way in which "either of the two ideas of [incomplete] individual freedom [e.g., 'abstract right' and 'morality'] is treated as an absolute".³⁹ Specifically, Honneth points to Hegel's analysis of the tendency he noted to consider either 'legal freedom' or 'moral autonomy' to be 'complete', or 'adequate', conceptions of individual freedom, corresponding in Hegel's work to the sphere of 'abstract right' (where persons respect each other as persons, i.e., as bearers of rights) and that of 'morality' (where each moral agent is respected as a bearer of his own conscience and so as having a right to autonomous moral judgment). In Hegel's view, since both notions of what freedom amounts to are incomplete, meaning selective, taking the one or the other "to some extent for the sum of the whole" of freedom leads to various forms of "social damage" as well as the fact that "the social reality itself will undergo some pathological dislocations".⁴⁰ According to Hegel's social ontology, social reality is embodied and sustained by a structure of rationality. In cases where an individual develops a self-understanding where either the idea of freedom as legal freedom or the idea of freedom as morality guided by

38 Axel Honneth, "Pathologien der individuellen Freiheit", *op. cit.*, p. 232 (my translation).

39 Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010/2000, p. 23.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

individual (private) conscience is absolutised and made the basis for the individual's social conduct, the "false and or one-sided understanding of self" will lead to concrete consequences in the form of a "suffering from indeterminacy" since it will conflict with the rationality of the social reality.⁴¹

Elaborating his criticism, Honneth states that Hegel came to the conclusion that

the only interactional relations in modern societies that can be understood as social elements of ethical life are those that fall under the organizational authority of the state and can therefore be institutionalized in terms of positive laws; for without such a possibility of state control the spheres in question would not possess the foundation of durability, reliability, and implementability that was necessary to make them a condition of freedom that was available to us under and under our control.⁴²

Honneth notes that in Hegel's account, the state serves as the organisational framework not only for the legal and political institutions, but also for the two other distinct social spheres making up 'ethical life', namely the family and civil society, the former defined as the sphere of love and friendship, based on the reciprocity of affective ties, the latter as the system of individually conceived and pursued needs, regulated by the reciprocity between bearers of rights.

In Honneth's view, Hegel's positing the state as the supreme organising framework for the *entirety* of ethical life and the arenas of interaction that it comprises, carries the cost that too little room is allowed for "various forms of social institutionalization".⁴³ To substantiate this objection, Honneth seizes on a formulation in § 260, where Hegel states that

concrete freedom requires that personal individuality [*Einzelheit*] and its particular interests should reach their full development and gain recognition of their right for itself (within the system of the family and of civil society), and also that they should, on the one hand, *pass over* of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and on the other, knowingly and willingly acknowledge this universal interest even as their own substantial spirit, and actively pursue it as their ultimate end.⁴⁴

41 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

44 G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 260, *op. cit.* (my emphasis).

Honneth interprets this to the effect that here “a horizontal relationship has suddenly been replaced by a vertical one”.⁴⁵ The implication is that instead of the individuals’ achieving the universal by way of common endeavour, the universal “seems to be given as something substantial, so that the recognition acquires the sense of a confirmation from below”.⁴⁶ Citing a few other paragraphs as cases in point, Honneth sees Hegel as portraying the citizens of the state as a “serviceable subject” and as voicing an “authoritarian liberalism”.⁴⁷

We are now in a position to answer the question raised above concerning the exact nature of Honneth’s objection against Hegel. What, according to Honneth, is wrong with the role that Hegel ascribes to institutions? Judging from the material just presented, what’s wrong seems to be twofold. First, Hegel makes too much depend on membership in institutions; by taking their legal core to be their essence qua arenas of ethical life, Hegel paints too homogenising a picture of all three spheres in question, not least the family. Second, this tendency is a product—a cost—of Hegel’s positing the state and its peculiar (public; legal, political) institutions as exemplifying ethical life *par excellence*, thus ignoring the distinctness of the two other ethical spheres. Giving primacy to the state entails promoting a top-down notion of how recognition of the universal comes to pass—namely, by the citizens’ bowing to it as pregiven instead of perceiving it as a dynamic product of their common endeavour.

To be sure, it is a long-standing objection to Hegel that he grants the individuals and their differences (their uniqueness) too little room within the institutions. But a number of formulations on Hegel’s part demonstrate that the objection fails to do his position full justice. For example, in a paragraph not quoted by Honneth, § 263 Addition, Hegel observes that

In Plato’s republic, subjective freedom is not yet recognised, because individuals still have their tasks assigned to them by the authorities [*Obrigkeit*]. But subjective freedom, which must be respected, requires freedom of choice on the part of individuals.⁴⁸

Elaborating on his notion of determinacy, Hegel stresses the importance of the rights of one person differing in content from that of another; in the family, say, the rights of the son are not the same in content as the son’s duties toward his father. As I see it, Hegel’s principal point is that

45 Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

47 *Ibid.*

48 G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, *op. cit.*, § 263, Addition.

in the process of fulfilling his duty, the individual must somehow attain his own interest and satisfaction or settle his own account, and from his situation within the state, a right must accrue to him whereby the universal cause becomes *his own particular* cause. Particular interests should certainly not be set aside, let alone suppressed; on the contrary, they should be harmonised with the universal, so that both they themselves and the universal are preserved.⁴⁹

In my view, the validity of Honneth's criticism of Hegel is limited not only by being based on an insufficiently nuanced reading of what Hegel actually says. More substantially, and in line with the perspective taken by Dufour, Honneth misses the mark because he places Hegel *too close* to the prevailing understanding of freedom (so-called 'romantic individualism') in the society being criticised. Rather, Hegel's by no means romantic point is that for lack of the duties that await each participant in institutional life, the individual's freedom is empty—meaning both without specific content and without direction. Freedom becomes concrete only insofar as it is given direction by ensuring that the individual gains access to and becomes committed to a specific standard of conduct which, qua intergenerationally transmitted standards, are not of his own making. I observed as much in my remarks about the role of professions; Hegel does so in speaking about the corporations.

5 What's the Problem, Determinacy or Indeterminacy?

Surely Honneth is not alone in targeting his criticism of Hegel at the latter's emphasis on determinacy and the function of institutions in providing it. Bearing in mind Dufour's analysis of the ills of contemporary society, I shall argue that this common criticism of Hegel has it the wrong way around; it amounts to barking up the wrong tree. Why? This time not because consulting various passages in Hegel not referred to by Honneth would yield a different interpretation. I am thinking of something else: the condition of the object under scrutiny. Let me put it like this: in a social situation shot through with indeterminacy, Hegel's emphasis on the positive function of determinacy must appear as part of the solution.

I take the disagreement between Hegel and Honneth to boil down to the following. Hegel is worried that when indeterminacy prevails, unfreedom results. Honneth to a large extent shares this worry and the reasons Hegel gives for

49 *Ibid.*, § 261.

it. At the end of the day, however, Honneth strikes me as more concerned by the opposite danger: that fostering determinacy à la Hegel is the prime threat against individual freedom.

Excessive determinacy, what precisely would that be? Looking back on the twentieth century, the answer is: totalitarianism, be it politically red or brown, Soviet communism or fascism. In such a social formation, freedom is crushed because nothing is up to the individual, everything—in terms of rights and duties—is decided on his behalf, vertically at that, with the individual having no choice but to obey, lest he be persecuted or killed. This historical lesson should vaccinate us against the lures of determinacy: before you know it, its promise of freedom, its provision of meaning and identity, values and goals, turns into the opposite: freedom's nemesis.

Turn now to the situation today. What is most striking? That everything is (that is, is said to be) up to the individual. And this in a social situation where there is no de facto excess of determinacy; rather, its near total absence, or collapse, is what is striking. I suggest that Dufour's notion of desymbolisation helps us appreciate what this amounts to today: *Desymbolisation is the form now taken by what Hegel diagnosed as the prevalence of indeterminacy*. In other words: the social and cultural collapse of determinacy can now be seen to produce desymbolisation in Dufour's sense.

If we grant this, what are the prospects of determinacy today, of reintroducing it in a situation shot through with its collapse? I believe that part of the problem is that we, heirs to the political catastrophes of last century, tend to think we have more to fear from (excessive) determinacy than from (excessive) indeterminacy. I think that Honneth is no exception. As a consequence of this *Zeitgeist*, the burden of argument rests with the advocate of determinacy, the latter being considered the principal—and historically well-documented—adversary of freedom.

In the present neoliberal era, freedom is living under conditions of indeterminacy. This condition is what freedom has become, what freedom is condemned to. To Hegel, of course, pointing to absence of direction and dissolution of standards as evidence that (subjective) freedom reigns, would be nothing short of ridiculous. If anything, our current predicament is the perversion of the promise of freedom.

But perhaps the hardest question is not philosophical but empirical. The question is: would today's individuals be at all *capable* of benefiting from determinacy replacing indeterminacy? If we are to believe Dufour, the answer seems to be in the negative. Discourse—ordinary symbolic communication—is breaking down all around us, he contends; in particular, it breaks down in the relationship between the generations, where the older generation is no

longer prepared to assume responsibility for the world into which it brings the young, its own children.⁵⁰ With symmetry replacing asymmetry between parent and child, teacher and pupil, doctor and patient, ensuring that everyone be on equal terms with everybody else, irrespective of the situation and the task at hand, what follows is the placing of responsibility onto the single individual, regardless of age, experience, competence and—last but not least, the suppressed variable in this ideology—power. And this assignment of responsibility for the entire series of actions undertaken by the individual, seen as so many choices of his and as truly of his making, is celebrated as proof of his actualised freedom.

“The discourse of responsibility makes for loneliness (*Vereinzelt*)”, observes Klaus Günther.⁵¹ It does so because it condemns the individual to making his choices, and to making them continually, endlessly, without access to any viable standards outside himself for doing so. Imprisoned in this symbolic vacuum, he is the opposite of free: impotent, without direction, over-exploiting psychic resources, namely his own in a clinical sense, with *burnout* (diagnosed only since 1977) and depression as the outcome. However, and not without irony, this lands the individual in a dialectic not novel to our times and certainly not lost on Hegel but a major concern of his: the more the individual is socially compelled to turn inwards and exploit whatever resources—now termed ‘human capital’—he may find there in order to come across as morally ‘autonomous’ and socially successful, the more will he in fact be at the mercy of *outside* forces.

For all the talk about self-sufficiency, about relying on oneself only and succeeding in shedding all ties and manifestations of dependency, perhaps never before in history has the individual been more other-directed than today (to use David Riesman’s term), and so more vulnerable to the responses from the social environment; and with that, more easy prey to whatever are the strongest demands directed at one as somebody not bound by some particular Other in Dufour’s sense. In society today there is no lack of advice as to what *you* should do in order to exploit *your* human capital for maximum effect in so many social arenas now turned into so many specialised markets. The increasing availability of technologies like cosmetic surgery to help the individual who, performing scrupulous self-inspection, finds herself unsatisfied with this

50 Per Bjørn Foros and Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Angsten for oppdragelse* [The Fear of Education], Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2012.

51 Klaus Günther, “Zwischen Ermächtigung und Disziplinierung: Verantwortung im gegenwärtigen Kapitalismus”, in Axel Honneth (ed.), *Befreiung aus der Mündigkeit, op. cit.*, pp. 117–139, p. 136.

or that feature of her body or her looks, creates a social expectation that, insofar as such a technique now exists and the individual can afford it, choosing to make use of it is the only sensible decision.⁵²

This allows us to see that our current predicament is *not* a near-complete absence of sociocultural, symbolically structured determinations. Rather, the issue as I see it is twofold: First, how to critically evaluate the exact nature and content of the now prevailing determinations when judged against a Hegelian understanding of freedom as relying on *the proper kind* of institutions-based determinations? Second, *what* would it require to *resist* the pressure exerted by the presently prevailing determinations?

The Hegelian answer is that for all their simplicity, ‘be thyself’ and ‘be happy’ are wholly vacuous goals and demands. Such injunctions are non-starters when it comes to answering the why and the how—that is, the issues of direction and validity. It is precisely this lack of content, this ‘freedom’ from substantiality, that helps portray them as completely ‘up to you to decide’, hence freely, independently, autonomously.

6 Institutions, Professions, and Resistance

Let me put the question of Hegel’s fruitfulness for critical social analysis today like this: If we grant the picture just painted, what about Hegel’s concern over indeterminacy? Did his diagnosis get it wrong? Is the problem rather overabundance of determinations? In trying to give an answer, let me pursue the issue as one crucially having to do with the possibility of resistance.

In the era of neoliberalism, the prospects for resistance, for overthrowing or rejecting what is demanded of the individual, have undergone profound changes as compared with earlier epochs. Why? Dufour’s account of the parallel processes of deinstitutionalisation and desymbolisation helps provide an answer. Let me put it like this: Resistance has become problematic because the values and ideals that would appear most helpful in enabling it, to a large extent have become identified with the very demands whose pressure one hopes to resist. Yes, the singular individual could protest, could try to resist, in the name of—what? In the name of authenticity, individuality, freedom of choice, the right to decide for himself. But these are but the hallmarks of the demands against which one was hoping to defend oneself. One cannot protect oneself by way of means that have become inseparable from that from which protection is sought.

52 Arne Johan Vetlesen, *A Philosophy of Pain*, London: Reaktion Books, 2010, p. 128 ff.

We seem to have reached an impasse. But I think there is, if not exactly a way out, at least a direction worth trying. That direction has to do with institutions. For too long, they have been seen as part of the problem and nothing more. Recall Dufour's observation about how Foucault and to some extent Bourdieu, by advancing a delegitimising critique, portraying key public institutions as so many arenas of suppression and disciplining, helped pave the way for the takeover of institutions accomplished under neoliberalism.⁵³ In the last two decades, this has happened to public institutions in the Nordic welfare states as well, where Labour governments have sought to "modernise" the public sector by taking the private sector as the model. The 'Third Way' is the neoliberal agenda carried out in social democratic guise.⁵⁴

Resistance to the kinds of pressure we are talking about here—against exploiting oneself in the name of freedom, authenticity, self-realisation—needs to be *collective* not individual. It needs to lay claim to the institutions and to challenge the political and economic uses to which they are currently put. To do so in an effective way, resistance must rely on the mutual dependency Hegel maintains between the individual's quest for freedom, understood as the enactment of practical rationality, on the one hand, and full-blown modern institutions in Hegel's sense of so many contexts for ethical life, on the other. Hegel reminds us that to be a successful social agent is to depend on others in a threefold sense: I require that others recognise me as having the social status and the identity I attribute to myself; that others recognise the deed as falling under the act-description which I invoke; and that others recognise me as acting on the intention I attribute to myself.⁵⁵ I exist as one of a kind, as *such* a person—a father, a teacher, a party-member—*by being treated as one*, according to the rules of the community, of the people involved, taken as rules that are reciprocally available for all.

I consider professions as indispensable when it comes to enabling the practice just described. The quality of my life as an individual is inseparable from and so dependent upon the qualities of the institutions of which I am a member; in this sense, my belonging within them, in some specific capacity, triggering specific rights and duties, is no threat to or constraint of my freedom, but its condition of possibility. Particularly in the Nordic nations renowned for their

53 See: Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2004; Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2011.

54 Clive Hamilton, *Growth Fetish*, London: Pluto Press, 2004; Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land: A Treatise on Our Present Discontents*, New York: Penguin, 2010.

55 See: Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 220.

welfare-state based egalitarianism, professions represent the principal site of resistance to the perversion of freedom neoliberal style, in that they are in content as well as form committed to the *Eigenart* of the task at hand: upbringing, teaching, building, nursing. Standards of excellence, codes of conduct, meaning and identity: these are all intrinsic to the task at hand and the way I witness other practitioners before me performing it in the proper manner, 'proper' as defined prior to each and every individual participant. Moreover, as a professional I am disposed to act like a citizen not a customer.

Since professions are irreplaceable for upholding non-commodified standards of functionality as well as non-commercial standards of value, it is no wonder they (alongside unions) have become, since neoliberalism's breakthrough thirty years ago, a favourite target of reform (New Public Management, Public-Private Partnership, etc.). The aim is to divest the professions of their commitments as resting *in re*, in the task as distinct from the commodity, in the why and the how as distinct from the profitability, in matters of quality as distinct from measurements of quantity and cost-benefit calculations. I must leave it to empirical studies of the professions today, struggling against being transformed into profit-generating machines, to show whether they are in fact up to the task of resistance. What I hope Hegel has helped us appreciate, is why they—potentially or actually—possess this function.

Democratic Disagreement and Embodied Dignity

The Moral Grammar of Political Conflicts

Odin Lysaker

After the terrorist attack of 22/7 in 2011, the need for making Norwegian social democracy ‘more democratic’ has been addressed, and there has been an ongoing discussion as to whether or not Norway should be understood in terms of a ‘community of disagreement’. Here, Chantal Mouffe’s post-democratic imaginary has been applied in order to address the need for this kind of society. According to her view, today’s Western states are undergoing an intertwined process of moralisation and de-politisation of democracy’s agonistic nature. Axel Honneth agrees to a great extent with Mouffe, as he also believes that conflict plays a significant role within democracies. Nonetheless, Honneth disagrees with Mouffe with regard to the relationship between conflict and morality. The lesson to be learned from Honneth is that democracies should be viewed as morally grounded in order to utilise political conflict as a potential resource.

In what follows I will argue that in order to be able to apply the Honnethian approach to the moral grammar of political conflicts in post-terror Norway, democratic disagreement should be normatively grounded in person’s embodied dignity. I will explain this claim further in four steps. In the first step, I shall reconstruct two different ways in which Honneth’s moral understanding of political conflict is normatively justified, namely Hegelian and Heideggerian. In the second step, I will show how Mouffe’s post-democracy thesis explains the relationship between morality and political conflict. In the third step, I shall analyse how the challenges of post-democracy can be solved through a recovering of a ‘democratic ethical life’ from either Honneth’s moral or Mouffe’s amoral but nonetheless normative stance. Here, I argue that Honneth’s approach is the most promising, at least when the moral grammar of democratic disagreement is read through his Heideggerian lens. In the

* My thanks to Titus Stahl, Andrew Schaap, Jonas Jakobsen, and Jørgen Pedersen for their valuable comments. I also wish to give my deep gratitude to Axel Honneth for inviting me to be a DAAD Visiting Ph.D. Fellow to Frankfurt University (2008–2009), which gave me the opportunity to discuss parts of this chapter with him.

fourth, and final, step of this chapter, I shall apply the comparison in the third step in the case of post-terror Norway. I will also argue that in order to be able to appreciate democratic disagreement in post-22/7 Norway, one should look more closely at the very way in which Honneth normatively grounds his political thought, namely in the recognition of the intersubjective preconditions of every citizen's personal integrity. Moreover, I will argue that Honneth should reactualise the lost opportunity of his grounding of recognition in humans' basic, invariant, and bodily need for love, which was part of his original political insight but later turned into his distinction between 'existential' and 'substantial' recognition forms, respectively. In doing so, a universal normative standard can be established on the basis of which a society may legitimise its democratic recognition struggles.

1 The Morality of Political Conflicts

One way of reading Honneth is to argue that the dialectical relationship between democracy ('post-traditional democratic ethical life'), conflict ('social conflict'), and morality ('moral grammar') constitutes his original political insight.¹ The logical upshot of this relationship is a political process through which society's democratic practices and institutions are further deepened. Thinking like this implies that the affinity between democracy and conflict is dialectical as far as citizens' negative experiences with injustice are expressed as moral claims for recognition and thus preservation of their personal integrity.² The lesson to be learned from this story is that a person's disrespected dignity serves as the normative grounding of struggles for recognition. Honneth sums up what is at stake here as follows: "[T]he conflict that breaks out between subjects represents, from the outset, something *ethical*, insofar as it is directed towards the intersubjective recognition of dimensions of human individuality". Indeed, political conflicts include, "from the start, not only a field of moral tensions but also the social medium by which they are settled".³ Thus, morality plays a significant role in Honneth's 'social therapeutic' understanding of democratic conflict.

The morality of political conflict in Honneth's approach is further specified through the lens of three different but interrelated dimensions, namely moral

1 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995/1992, pp. 160–170, 175.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 171–175.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18 (my emphasis).

motivation, moral status, and moral justification.⁴ While the notion of moral motivation refers to the moral-psychological explanation of what on an individual level motivates citizens to act politically, the concept of moral status implies on an institutional level a legal-political account of the recognition of the citizenship ascribed to society's members. The third dimension, *moral justification*, is according to Honneth's picture rather related to the morality of political conflict.

The above being said, his notion of the 'moral grammar' of political conflicts seems at best to be very complex, but at its weakest when it comes to definitorial clarity.⁵ What therefore interests me in the following is the kind of moral justification operative in Honneth's writings. In my reading, I will focus on what I consider to be two central framings of the moral justification for democratic conflict, namely a Hegelian and a Heideggerian approach. In this first step of the chapter, I attempt to reconstruct these frameworks in order to clarify what can be claimed to be the very normativity of Honneth's notion of the 'moral grammar' of political conflict.

1.1 *Hegelian Relationality*

G.W.F. Hegel has perhaps had the strongest influence on Honneth's political thought.⁶ It is not surprising, then, that one of his two main frameworks of moral justification is Hegelian. This seems to indicate what I call a multi-dimensional framing that comprises Honneth's three forms of recognitive attitudes within his theory of recognition, namely love, respect, and esteem.⁷ First, the recognitive attitude of love and care refers to a mutual and emotional bonding between individuals involved in close personal relationships. Second, recognitive attitudes as in the case of respect and rights include the attribution of moral responsibility and the recognition of persons' status as bearers of

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 95.

5 Honneth is also interested in how to channel individuals and groups' experience of disrespect, and how they attempt to find 'individual strength' in order to articulate their experiences in the "democratic public sphere, rather than living them out in the counterculture of violence". See: Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 78.

6 See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011. Honneth's political thought is also very much inspired by John Dewey, as in his contribution to this volume—"Education and the Public Sphere: A Neglected Chapter of Political Philosophy"—as well as: Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today", in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007/1998, pp. 218–239.

7 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–130.

citizenship as well as human rights within an institutional arrangement. Third, in Honneth's account, the notion of a recognitive attitude also involves esteem and achievement among fellow citizens who interact with solidarity in civil society.

The implication of this understanding of normative justification "comprises (...) three moral attitudes that *cannot*, in turn, be ranked from some superior vantage point".⁸ By this token, Honneth argues that the "moral point of view has to encompass not just one, but three independent modes of recognition".⁹ The essence of the whole is mirrored, then, in the claim that none of the three forms of recognitive attitudes can be prioritised over any of the two others. The opposite is closer to the truth: within a Hegelian framework, all three dimensions of must be contained within the same justification strategy. The all-important intuition here seems to concern the objective of such a complex way to morally grounded political conflicts, namely to identify what Honneth terms "the formal conception of democratic ethical life". In doing so, he points to the "intersubjective conditions for personal integrity", that is, the struggle for the recognition of the inherent worth of every human person.¹⁰

1.2 *Heideggerian Existentialism*

The great strength of one of Honneth's later works—and in contrast to his Hegelian framing—is his adoption of what I understand to be a Heideggerian framework of moral justification.¹¹ Approaching from this angle, Honneth seems to normatively reframe his recognition theory as grounded in what he describes as an "existential", a "primordial", and even a "*more elementary* form of recognition". There is yet another aspect to this as well, as Honneth himself states that this existential form of recognition "provides a foundation for *all other*, more substantial forms of recognition".¹² To understand the further implication of the introduction of this distinction between an 'existential' and a 'substantial' recognition form, respectively, one has to observe that Honneth takes the former to be a more basic recognition form than the latter. As an

8 *Ibid.*, p. 141 (my italics).

9 Axel Honneth, "Between Aristotle and Kant: Recognition and Moral Obligation", in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007/1998, pp. 129–143, p. 138.

10 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–175.

11 In other works in the later Honneth, however, Heidegger seems to play less or no role. See for example: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*; Axel Honneth, *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012/2010.

12 Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008/2005, pp. 37, 90, fn. 70 (my italics).

implication, the notion of an 'existential' recognition does not refer to any of the three ordinary forms of recognitive attitude, namely love, respect, and esteem. On the contrary, it serves as their transcendental condition.¹³

Honneth explains, nevertheless, that statements such as the abovementioned on an explanatory level are of a rather philosophical-anthropological or social-ontological character (although these two concepts are not necessarily interchangeable). By maintaining this position, his objective seems to be to explicate a person's 'affective' and thus embodied dispositions on a basic existential level through the lens of concepts such as 'existential' (i.e., care, solicitude, and concern) (Martin Heidegger) and 'empathetic' or 'existential engagement' (Georg Lukács), as well as 'practical involvement' (John Dewey) and 'acknowledgement' (Stanley Cavell).¹⁴ What these notions have in common is not only what Honneth holds to be an existential mode of recognition, namely 'prior to cognition'. Also, existential recognition has a basis which he takes to have both a 'genetic and conceptual priority'.¹⁵

As far as the question of the morality of political conflict is concerned, it is very important to make clear the way in which Honneth reads Heidegger, namely by resulting in an inconsistency with regard to the framing of the normative status of the 'existential' recognition form. For as he explains, this notion both has and does not have normative significance. According to one of Honneth's stories, the existential recognition form is "clearly *not* intended to contain *any* norms of positive concern or respect".¹⁶ He thus appears to claim that because this form of recognition is more elementary than the three recognitive attitudes, it does not encompass any standard normative theory or principles.

Although in the quotation above, Honneth himself does not ascribe any normative fabric to existential recognition, it may be asked whether it might yet correspond to some sort of normative justification. To Honneth's way of thinking, this kind of recognition is also to be understood as the opposite to the notion of reification, that is, an action in which a person turns other human individuals into instruments or means in order to realise their objectives. To make the nature of this conceivable, Honneth refers to what he takes to be Martha Nussbaum's way of identifying a normative moment of an existential grounding of recognitive attitudes. The evidence at hand seems to allow the argument that all kinds of action which do not mutually

13 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 35, 36, 38, 40, 47, 53, 55, 103.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 35, 36, 38, 40, 46, 55.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 151 (my italics).

recognise this existential precondition of human life, and thus are non-instrumentalising, “[violate] moral or ethical principles by not treating other subjects in accordance with their characteristics as human beings, but instead as numb and lifeless objects”.¹⁷ Another way in which the same point may be formulated is when Honneth claims that this Heideggerian approach is “obviously *not* without normative content” since it refers to a way in which a person can live without being reified by others.¹⁸ If this is not achievable, Honneth concludes that reification “violates the elementary conditions that underlie *all* our talk of morality”.¹⁹ Even if Honneth’s introduction of the existential recognition form seems somewhat ambivalent, particularly with regard to its normative status and implications, I nevertheless consider this account to be an acknowledgement of a framework of moral justification that potentially moves beyond—or, rather, grounds—Hegelian ethics (e.g., is ascribed a ‘genetic priority’).

2 Post-Democracy

Let me now, in the second step of this chapter, move on to Mouffe’s post-democratic vision.²⁰ Although this concept is ambiguous and may be defined in different ways, here it refers to the claim that today’s democracies are going through an interconnected and thus reinforcing process of moralisation and de-politisation. If this is true, the relationship results in the disenfranchisement of democracy. Democratic disenfranchisement calls attention to a weakening of the citizens’ political voice and participation.

2.1 Moralisation

To make the nature of moralisation conceivable, Mouffe points to what she takes to be a “link between morality and politics”.²¹ This supports the thesis that democratic meaning- and will-formation in the public space is “played

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 26 (my emphasis).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149 (my italics).

²⁰ For Mouffe’s use of this concept, see: Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2005a, pp. 2, 8, 29. See also: Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.

²¹ Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 13. Mouffe also criticises rationalism and individualism. See: *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 10–12; Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London: Verso, 2005b/1993, p. 2.

out in the moral register". By calling attention to this register, Mouffe sheds light on political communication as based on a "vocabulary of morality".²² This all-important observation concerns a vocabulary that introduces a normative distinction between which political struggles are morally 'right' or 'wrong'. This observation helps draw attention to the fact that that democratic discourse in the public space becomes a "specific field of application of morality".²³ If this is true, the moral mode of political communication is presented as 'universal', namely what Mouffe takes to be part of the liberal-democratic claim of a normative standard shared by all citizens.

Approaching democracy from this angle discloses the idea that as long as society is characterised by a high degree of pluralism, moral consensus is not achievable.²⁴ Rather, Mouffe insists, democracy should be established and developed as a space within which the citizens' conflicting conceptions of what is held to be morally universal or not can be contextualised and contested throughout political debates.²⁵ Contrary to what is assumed by moral universalism, one may argue that "there is no point of view external to all tradition from which one can offer a universal judgment".²⁶ This further means that those norms presented by parties in public discourse as moral and hence representative of a kind of pre-established common nature or will must always be re-negotiated and re-defined by all affected parties within the public space. What is apparent here is Mouffe's concern for the viewpoint that the formation of citizens' identity and values cannot precede public deliberation since this would trump the conflictual and hence potential constructive nature of democratic agonism. Instead of a morally grounded understanding of political conflicts, Mouffe holds that every democratic order is only based on "temporary and precarious articulation of the contingent practices".²⁷ If this claim is convincing, political conflict is neither constituted by nor dependent upon morality. Conflict is rather constitutive of any democratic society.

Here, Mouffe's distinction between agonism and antagonism is crucial. The concept of 'antagonism' refers to the we/they relationship "in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground", whereas the notion

22 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 10; Chantal Mouffe, "Preface: Democratic Politics Today", in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, London: Verso, 1992, pp. 1–14, p. 10.

25 Chantal Mouffe, *Return of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 76.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

27 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

of 'agonism' is a we/they relation where "the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy" of their adversaries.²⁸ Hence, the we/they dynamic—which can be taken to be constitutive of all political action by establishing an identity-based dialectic between social in-groups and out-groups—can take the two forms of negative antagonism and constructive agonism, respectively. Yet another aspect is the moralisation of the we/they distinction as such. Mouffe claims, as already explained, that democracy is dependent upon a dynamic relation between 'we' and 'they', which means a distinction between adversaries based on the plurality of the collective's identities and values. The we/they distinction is, she holds, a dynamic democratic force insofar as it constitutes different group identification for which citizens are motivated to protect or even struggle. The problem of democratic disenfranchisement occurs, Mouffe argues, at the point when the we/they distinction is described through the abovementioned moral vocabulary. The moralisation of the we/they distinction results in a situation in which citizens are recognised as 'absolute enemies' (e.g. 'morally wrong') rather than political adversaries. Such a moralisation is problematic as far as it falsely attempts to turn the agonistic nature of democracy into a procedure with the objective of reaching a moral and universal consensus.

2.2 *De-politisation*

The end result of Mouffe's post-democracy picture is not only the moralisation of democracy but also its de-politisation. In addition to the issue of how democratic interaction is structured by a distinction between the morally right and wrong, democratic societies are disenfranchised through the moral vocabulary that recognises fellow citizens as enemies rather than adversaries. If this is the case, the moral de-politisation of democracy results in a situation in which agents and institutions define opponents who have different opinions than theirs as parties that are not worth recognising on the basis of inclusion and participatory parity in public discourse. This kind of misrecognition of citizens' deep diversity also turns the democratic public into a space out of which societal members are excluded rather than included. It is common intuition to look upon the democratic sphere as a space in which citizens recognise each other's right to have political freedoms. The challenge posed by the disenfranchisement process, then, is a democratic paradox, namely that many citizens are affected by the state's policy-making but nonetheless are

28 *Ibid.*

excluded from influencing this process. If there is a lesson to be learned from the post-democratic account, it is exactly that the very idea of inclusion within a liberal democracy turns into exclusion. It follows, then, that the moralisation of the political closes the openness presupposed by the democratic public. The public sphere depends on mutual recognition between its citizens so that everyone can participate on par with one another. While this is true as far as it goes, democratic communication among the citizens based on moralisation and de-politisation indicates that citizens are not able to express their identity and values to the fullest degree regarding what the goal within the framework of liberal democracy actually is, as only meanings that can reach a reasonable agreement are defined as 'morally right'.

Yet another aspect of the process of de-politisation is the reduction of what Mouffe calls the political to that of politics. By using the term 'politics', she means "the manifold practices of conventional politics".²⁹ Here, Mouffe includes—on an ontic level, in line with Heidegger's existential philosophy—all social practices and institutions as far as they establish an order that organises "human coexistence in the context of conflictuality" or the "hegemonic nature of every kind of social order".³⁰ Still drawing on Heidegger, Mouffe defines the notion of 'the political' as a fundamental-ontological level concerning "the very way in which the society is instituted". The implication of this is that the democratic order depends on the fundament of the political rather than the policy-making of ordinary politics. The political is, then, "the dimension of antagonism which (...) [is] constitutive of human societies".³¹ Thinking like this is to state that the political is always an initial excluding expression of a "particular structure of power relations".³² According to this view, democracy will always involve a dialectic relation between a hegemonic order and counter-hegemonic reactivation from repression. But as long as a democratic society undergoes the process of moralisation and de-politisation, such hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles are not achievable. Instead, Mouffe claims, the agonistic nature of democracy is reduced to a post-democratic order.

29 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 17.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

3 Recovering Democratic Ethical Life

Honneth and Mouffe seem to agree to a great extent that there is an affinity between democracy and conflict. In spite of this, they disagree on the role of morality in regard to this relationship: Honneth argues that political conflict can be grounded in what he terms a moral grammar, while Mouffe claims that moralisation results in post-democracy. The implication seems to be, then, that whereas Honneth views morality as the solution, Mouffe thinks it is the very problem itself. As a result, Honneth must reject Mouffe's post-democracy thesis, as he looks upon morality both as a precondition for and the result of democratic struggles for recognition.

Nonetheless, I argue that in order to shed light on how to recover democratic ethical life from the pathologies of post-democracy, Honneth should reactualise the lost opportunity of his original political insight as to be found in the affinity between conflict, morality, and democracy (see Section 1). To do so, he has to revisit the internal resources of *moral re-democratisation* within the framework of his recognition theory. By this, I refer to the abovementioned framings of normative justification, namely the Hegelian and Heideggerian, respectively. But as I will attempt to show, both these two normative frameworks suffer from a *universal deficit*. By this, I mean the lack of a sufficient normative standard on the basis of which it is possible to ground the intersubjective precondition of personal integrity as well as the moral grammar of political conflicts. However, by reactualising his original political insight—particularly through recognition as love—such a normative standard may be identified as persons' embodied dignity. Thus, in order to show how Honneth can avoid the normative relativism that is operative in Mouffe's post-democratic imaginary, I will in this third section of my chapter compare Honneth's normative justification with regard to the non-moral but nonetheless normative moment in Mouffe.

3.1 Normative Relativism

Although Honneth's way of justifying normative claims may at first sight look more convincing than Mouffe's with regard to the objective of establishing a universal standard, the Hegelian moment to be found in the works of both authors rather implies a normative relativism. As I will explain in Section 3.2, this is particularly due to Honneth's anthropological turn in 2002, which resulted in the replacement of an invariant with a contingent notion of recognition as love. There is certainly a universal normative moment in his account of recognition as respect (i.e., human rights), drawing on Kantian moral and political philosophy. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the Hegelian

framework in the later Honneth is not justified as a due normative universalism, as its objective is to encompass all three forms of recognition rather than respect alone. As a result, his framework is not 'thin' enough to justify a normative universalism.

In Mouffe, too, such a contingent element seems to be at work. As is already evident, she rejects Kantian approaches to morality. Moreover, although Mouffe does not explicitly draw on Hegel (as in the case of Honneth), the truth of the matter is that many of her political viewpoints may be read as Hegelian.³³ As I showed above, her all-important point is that the combined process of moralisation and de-politisation results in post-democracy. Still, what at first sight could have been taken as Mouffe's anti-moral or even amoral approach to democracy should nonetheless be read in a normative vein. Thinking like this leads one to the viewpoint that democratic disenfranchisement can be solved by grounding democracy in what she terms a set of certain contextual 'ethico-political' values.³⁴ By this, Mouffe refers to what she takes to be standard liberal-democratic principles, namely freedom and equality. In a democracy conditioned by deep diversity, however, these values have to be defined and legitimised by the "dissent about their interpretation" over and over again.³⁵ It is, therefore, important to observe that even though she introduces a normative standard—that is, the ethico-political values of freedom and equality—in order to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate political struggles, Mouffe also holds that these value-based struggles will always be grounded in political decision-making and must therefore remain open to interpretive contestation and specific practices within particular contexts.

Still, Mouffe argues that in order to be legitimate, political conflicts must somehow take a form that establishes a kind of common bond between the parties who are in conflict with each other. By recovering de-politicised democracies based on the ethico-political values, as well as collective identity and association, she claims that citizens also need to share a common symbolic space within which political conflicts and power relations may take place. This ensures that the aim of democracy is to apply this shared space—not in order to reach democratic consensus but to "transform antagonism into agonism".³⁶

On this note, Mouffe states that there exist no "non-negotiable moral values" prior to the public debate. Democracy is, therefore, empty in the sense of open

33 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, 2001/1985, p. 95.

34 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 31–32, 121–122.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

spaces of power which are hegemonised by citizens' particular and competing identities and values. What is meant by this is that as long as democracy is not grounded in any moral precondition, citizens may participate on par with each other in political processes in which the democracy's principles and practices can be continuously negotiated and redefined. If this is true, democracy plays a significant political role by establishing a tolerance vis-à-vis the pluralism and conflicting viewpoints of citizens as well as critique of hegemonic power-relations. Democratic struggles are thus motivated by agonism through which these spaces of power contribute by constructing "new meanings and fields of application for the idea of democracy".³⁷

In my reading, Honneth and Mouffe share to a large extent a Hegelian intuition with regard to their normative justification of political conflicts. While Honneth applies the differentiation of the three forms of recognition as principles of a just political order, Mouffe's interpretation of the norms of freedom and equality is constitutive of the political.³⁸ What is more, the later Honneth's understanding of recognition as love, as well as Mouffe's power-based approach to ethical-political values, depends on a contingent and hence non-universal justification. It also seems that in Honneth's case—in contrast to Mouffe—the implications of the Hegelian contingency for the understanding of the precondition of personal integrity is far from unproblematic. I shall further elaborate on this point in the next section.

3.2 *Embodied Dignity*

In both Honneth and Mouffe, the fundamental ontology of Heidegger plays—as I have already argued—a significant role. Nevertheless, neither of the two philosophers seems to fully appreciate the very 'fundamentality' of their own existential approach. As a result, in the stance of Honneth as well as Mouffe, there seems to be at work a certain ambivalence towards what I take to be a rather 'strong' philosophical anthropology, which is based on the embodiment of human persons.

In the subsequent case of Honneth's Heideggerian framing, his moral justification of political conflicts reminds us of an existential approach containing at least two implications, namely a conceptual and normative, respectively. Let me begin with the former by recalling Honneth's original insight with regard to

37 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

38 See: Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition: A Response to Nancy Fraser", in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, pp. 110–197, p. 181.

the concept of recognition as love. In his early formulation in *The Struggle for Recognition*, which was originally published in 1992, Honneth defines love as a form of recognition which “constitutes the psychological precondition for the development of all further” recognitive attitudes (e.g., respect and esteem).³⁹ Moreover, love is understood as the precondition of an individual’s “*basic* psychological [and emotional] self-confidence”. As a consequence, Honneth claims, recognition as love “follows largely [an] *invariant* logic”. Hence, recognition as love “*cannot* vary with the historical period”.⁴⁰ As a result, he concludes that “[b]ecause [love] does *not* admit of the potential of normative development, the integration of love into the intersubjective network of a post-traditional form of [democratic] ethical life *does not change* its fundamental character”.⁴¹ According to Honneth’s picture, then, recognition as love is a non-contingent, embodied, and basic human need.⁴²

Only ten years later, however, Honneth changed his mind with regard to recognition as love. In what I call the anthropology debate in 2002, he redefined the concept of love as historical *contingent*: “[W]e ought to view the differentiation of various kinds of recognition *not* as an ahistorical given but rather as the result of a directional *process*”.⁴³ The evidence at hand, then, seems to point in the direction of a diametrically different understanding of the concept of love in 2002 when compared to that of 1992.

However, as already explained (see Section 1.2), Honneth applies a new and existential form of recognition. Here, it is worth noticing that *Reification*, the book in which he introduces this notion, was originally published in German in 2005. This means that no more than three years after the anthropology debate, Honneth changes his mind with regard to framing of his recognition theory. While Honneth in 2002 rejects the early and invariant fundament of 1992, he now *reintroduces* such invariance into his recognitive framework. To make this argument plausible, let me introduce a distinction between a weak and strong form of philosophical anthropology. With the concept of a *weak* anthropology, I mean analysis of a human person which does not include any contingent claims about her or his needs, capacities, or characteristics. By the notion of a

39 Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 133 (my italics).

41 *Ibid.*, p. 176 (my emphasis).

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 129, 133, 176.

43 Axel Honneth, “Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions”, in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp. 499–519, p. 511. See also: Axel Honneth, “Redistribution as Recognition”, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

strong anthropology, however, I refer to an understanding of a person which is grounded in some invariant needs, capacities, or characteristics.

On the background of this distinction, it may be argued that Honneth's latest anthropological development is in accordance not only with the 1992 version of his recognition theory. In addition, Honneth's 2005 anthropology seems to be in continuity with his anthropological thoughts on "the unchanging preconditions of human changeableness" in the early 1980s.⁴⁴ Although such an affinity seems to exist, it is surprising that Honneth, rather than adopting an existential form of recognition, does not reactualise the invariant concept of recognition as love that was operative in 1992. As far as I can see, at least on an explanatory level, such a development would have been sufficient in order to establish a fundament for his recognition theory which could be ascribed what Honneth calls a 'genetic priority'.

One problem with my reading is of course that there is no direct link (at least no conceptual one) between Honneth's concept of recognition of love (neither in the version of 1992 nor 2002) on the one hand, and Heidegger's notion of care on the other. In order to overcome this challenge, however, one must avoid having too close a look at these concepts as such. Instead, what is of significance is what I understand to be one of Honneth's objectives throughout his career, namely to constantly reformulate the anthropological grounding of his recognition theory. If read in this manner, his use of Heidegger's notion of care may be precisely taken as an attempt to readopt a strong anthropology. The reason is that Heidegger's fundamental ontology, which includes the notion of an 'existential', offers a necessary explanatory level. On this token, I hold that it would be more theoretically consistent to have reformulated the significant insights and implications of what can be read as Honneth's existential outlook *within* the framework of his original Hegelian and multidimensional account. What is more, such a viewpoint, which may be grounded in basic human needs, is still experiential as well as empirical, and thus consistent with Honneth's overall post-metaphysical program of Critical Theory.⁴⁵

After having analysed the conceptual implication of the later Honneth's existential viewpoint, let me now move on to what may be seen as its normative implication. On the background of my reading above, the concept of love

44 Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988/1980, p. 7.

45 For such an account, see: Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication: A Critical Study of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, pp. 369 ff.

as a form of existential recognition seems to result in a particular account of *embodied dignity*.⁴⁶ As I have already shown (see Section 1), the aim of recognition is to ascribe the normative status of integrity to persons. Moreover, even if Honneth shows ambivalence with regard to the question of the normative significance of existential recognition, it may be read precisely as the threshold under which no human should be treated in order to avoid reification or instrumentalisation. Taken together, recognitive love and existential recognition—as both these concepts exist genetically and conceptually prior to the recognitive attitudes of respect and esteem—may be understood as the bodily grounding of a person's human dignity.⁴⁷ As the body can be defined as given, irremovable, and non-optional to all human persons, its inherent vulnerability and dependency may at the same time be thought of as the experiential precondition for the recognitive claim of inviolability.

If so read, however, Honneth's interpretation of Heidegger's fundamental ontology as merely a social one must be exchanged by a *moral ontology*. By this, I mean an understanding of the ontological fact of a person's embodiment as having normative significance.⁴⁸ This point can be formulated as follows: "an entity that exists has an ontological need inasmuch as it demands to continue to be, and to continue to be in the state that [the human person] is".⁴⁹ Within the Honnethian framework such a basic need may be identified as the recognitive attitude of love, as far as it is conceivable precisely as existential

46 For such an account of human dignity, see: Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006. See also: Sarah Clark Miller, *The Ethics of Need: Agency, Dignity, and Obligation*, New York: Routledge, 2012; Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency*, New York: Routledge, 1999. Also G.W.F. Hegel seems to have such concept of embodied dignity in mind as he states: "My body is the existence of freedom". See: G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991/1820, § 48.

47 For a reconstruction of Honneth's philosophical anthropology inspired by Maurice Merleau Ponty, see: Jean-Philippe Deranty, "The Loss of Nature in Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition: Rereading Mead with Merleau-Ponty", in *Critical Horizons*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 153–181.

48 See: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 8–9, 41. See also: Knud E. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997/1956; Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996, Ch. 4.

49 Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication*, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

and thus more elementary than the recognitive attitude of respect and esteem. Here, the notion of moral ontology—in opposition to social ontology—signifies that prior to becoming an agent, human beings exist as physical entities.⁵⁰ Moreover, as this feature may be interpreted as given prior to the time and place in which the person enters into intersubjective relations of recognition, the normative significance of such embodied agency is moral in the sense that it is to protect the vulnerability of all human persons against violations: “bodily need, including the need for [love and] care, is a feature of our rationality and our sociability; it is one aspect of our dignity, then, rather than something to be contrasted with it”.⁵¹ In this sense, love is a basic bodily need (e.g., invariant) which makes every human person extensively vulnerable (i.e., birth, childhood, illness, aging, and mortality) and dependent prior to what Honneth calls the ordinary forms of recognitive attitude (e.g., respect and esteem). Due recognition as love is thus the dignifying responsiveness to the ontology of human persons’ embodied vulnerability.⁵² Consequently, such moral justification is based on a person’s capabilities, which means that the recognitive attitudes of respect and esteem toward these capabilities are secondary to the person’s capabilities-dependence on love as such.⁵³

Although a Heideggerian moment is at work with regard to the relationship between democracy and conflict in both Honneth and Mouffe, their justificatory strategy seems to move in somewhat different directions. While Honneth’s adoption of an existential level of recognition does not necessarily have any implications for the morality of political conflicts, Mouffe subsequently draws on the ‘existential’ as a precondition for the political in itself. Therefore, Mouffe’s account could have been the most relevant to democratic theory had it not been for her seeming rejection of anything, in Honnethian terms, ‘more elementary’—such as philosophical anthropology or moral ontology—as representing nothing else than a hegemonic and hence normatively contingent power. But the later Honneth’s reading of Heidegger is also confronted with some of the same problems, since his former universal grounding of recognitive love has lately been reformulated as a mere Hegelian contingency.⁵⁴

50 Charles Taylor, “The Validity of Transcendental Arguments”, in *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 20–33, p. 22.

51 Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 76–78, 87, 168–169.

53 Arto Laitinen, “Sorting Out Aspects of Personhood: Capacities, Normativity, and Recognition”, in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2007, Vol. 14, No. 5–7, pp. 1–23, p. 16.

54 For a further development of such a normative relativism, see: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*

4 Democratic Disagreement after Terrorism

Let me now turn to the fourth, and final, step of this chapter, namely the application of the previous normative framings to post-terrorism as in the case of 22/7. Up until now, I have attempted to show that Honneth's normative justification of the morality of democratic conflict, particularly in its Heideggerian formulation, is more convincing than Mouffe's amoral one. Let me now, therefore, identify the fabric of what I term 'democracy of disagreement' by spelling it out on the basis of which democratic disagreement can be practiced after 22/7. To do so, I also wish to apply the recovered universal basis of the morality of democratic recognition struggles.

4.1 *The Year without Summer*

On 22 July 2011, the far-right extremist Anders Behring Breivik bombed several government buildings in Oslo as well as shot teenagers who were attending summer camp for the Workers' Youth League (AUF) of the Labour Party on the island of Utøya. In total, Behring Breivik's terrorist attack resulted in the deaths of 77 people. Shortly thereafter, the Norwegian police arrested him on Utøya. Behring Breivik was then charged with both the abovementioned attacks, and the trial against him took place in the spring of 2012. While Behring Breivik admitted to having carried out the actions he was accused of, he denied any criminal guilt because he claimed defence due to necessity. On 24 August 2012, Behring Breivik was convicted as charged and sentenced to 21 years of prison.

In a small country such as Norway, which has approximately 5 million citizens, an event such as 22/7 seemed to affect people to a larger extent because 'everyone' knows someone who was personally or indirectly affected in one way or another by this tragedy. In the report of the 22/7 Commission, the following was stated: "All of Norway is affected by 22/7, but some more directly and strongly than others". The commission concluded, therefore, that "[t]he large number of fatalities and casualties means that there are also many survivors and their families who are affected".⁵⁵ Moreover, a statistical survey made right after 22/7 found that on average, twenty-five per cent of Norwegians knew someone who was directly affected by the terrorist attack.⁵⁶ In his speech at the National Memorial Ceremony only one month after the event, King Harald attempted to grasp the Norwegian people's emotional reactions of loss and grief: "There is so little that has not already been said. (...) It can take

55 <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/37994796/PDFS/NOU201220120014000DDDPDFS.pdf>, p. 259 (my translation; the report has only been published in Norwegian).

56 "1 av 4 kjenner rammed" [1 of 4 Know a Victim], *Klassekampen*, 19 August 2011.

a long time to regain equilibrium after [such] a traumatic experience”.⁵⁷ Some Norwegian newspapers even reported that this incident was the deadliest attack in Norway since the Second World War.⁵⁸ This viewpoint was also part of a speech held by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg only a few days after 22/7, in which he declared that “(...) [t]here will be a Norway before and Norway after 22 July”. He also compared the terror with Germany’s assault on Norway on 9 April 1940: “Our fathers and mothers promised us, ‘There will never be another 9 April’. We say, ‘There will never be another 22 July’”.⁵⁹ What these observations share is the viewpoint that 22/7 “will influence Norwegians in the years to come”.⁶⁰

4.2 Value Conflict vs. Value Community

But 22/7 also seems to have had implications for the way in which the members of Norwegian society had to confront themselves in the aftermath of the terrorist attack by mobilising, negotiating, and re-thinking a number of core values such as democracy, freedom of speech, tolerance, and solidarity. Through this process, many questions have been raised by politicians and academics—as well as in the media and among the general population—regarding what constitutes Norwegian identity and values, how to establish tolerance within the context of cultural pluralism, and how to engage responsibly in debates in the new social media fora.

In the classical ‘Hobbesian problem of order’ (Talcott Parsons), the question of what is constitutive—freedom or order, conflict or integration—of society as such has been raised. After 22/7, the notion of a ‘community of disagreement’ was a central topic in the public discourse on the core values of Norwegian society. Among the most typical answers to the social order question is the choice between ‘value community’ or ‘value conflict’. While the first answer indicates some shared values (in § 2 of the Norwegian constitution referred to as ‘our Christian and humanistic heritage’), the other answer

57 www.royalcourt.no/tale.html?tid=93378&sek=103806&scope=27248.

58 “Norway still ‘an open society’ despite ‘the horror’” (interview with Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg), CNN 25 July 2011, see: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/07/25/norway.terror.attacks/index.html>; “Tre timer som forandret Norge [Three Hours that Changed Norway]”, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 28 December 2011. See: <http://www.aftenbladet.no/nyheter/lokalt/Tre-timer-som-forandret-Norge-291085.html>.

59 http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/smk/Whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/statsministeren/statsminister_jens_stoltenberg/2011/prime-ministers-address-at-the-city-hall.html?id=651840.

60 Stian Bromark, *Selv om sola ikke skinner: Et portrett av 22. juli* [Even if the Sun Does Not Shine: A Portrait of 22 July], Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012, p. 233 (my translation).

presupposes that there is a ‘secular’ or ‘neutral’ ground on which citizens may share certain core values.

Instead of taking this supposedly false anti-thesis as a point of departure, some Norwegian social scientists introduced the term ‘community of disagreement’ as a new conceptual way of reflecting upon identity and values after 22/7.⁶¹ The attempt here was to identify some basic norms on the one hand while on the other hand recognising what they took to be both historical and social fact: People have always been in disagreement and conflict concerning identity and values. Instead of trying to achieve a moral consensus on the basis of a non-existent ‘Norwegian’ identity, it was argued—in a rather Mouffeian vein—that a better strategy is to recognise the cultural and value-based pluralism among citizens themselves. Here, the premise seems to be—as in Honneth—that historical change results in societal pluralism and conflict as well as development and progress, which in turn presupposes mutual recognition as respect and tolerance among citizens. It is important to notice that although the Norwegian society is understood as a community of disagreement, this does not imply making the claim that there is no need for common values. Rather, the opposite could be claimed: Any society needs some basic values as long as they are open for negotiating and redefining them through democratic discourse.

4.3 *Democracy of Disagreement*

Shortly after 22/7, the Prime Minister and leader of the Social Democratic Party, Stoltenberg, made an appeal to Norwegian citizens for “more democracy”.⁶² This entreaty raises a follow-up question, namely: More of *what kind* of democracy? One immediate answer to this question would be ‘more of the same’, namely a continuation of the already established combination of liberal and social democracy.

In contrast, it could be held that it is more important to address ‘the other’ of the liberal democracy of social-democratic Norway, namely pluralism, disagreement, and conflict. If one is to believe Mouffe’s post-democratic vision, what appears to be needed is an alternative model of democracy that somehow deepens the public space and thus develops a greater degree of

61 See, among others: Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Det som står på spill* [What Is at Stake], Oslo: Aschehoug, 2012; Sindre Bangstad, *et al.*, “Straffer ikke det straffbare” [Penalties Not the Criminal], *Aftenposten* 31 August 2011; Lars Laird Iversen, “Et uenighetsfellesskap” [A Community of Disagreement], *Dagsavisen* 21 February 2012.

62 http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/smk/Whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/statsministeren/statsminister_jens_stoltenberg/2011/shocking-and-cowardly.html?id=673127.

tolerance towards the pluralism of identity and values among citizens of post-22/7 Norway.⁶³

However, if one follows Honneth, in line with the notion of a 'community of disagreement', it could be appealed to the development towards what I term *democracy of disagreement*. The objective of such a model of democracy is citizens' actual ability to mutually recognise each other along the lines of the recognitive attitudes (i.e., love, respect, and esteem) in order to *agree to disagree*. This echoes John Rawls' famous formulation of the 'duty of civility', which implies that citizens should mutually *listen* to and *learn* from each other.⁶⁴ Additionally, democracy of disagreement includes the objective to 'know your adversary' by going into the conflict with your eyes open. As an implication, and in addition to a 'strong' and formal public within the framework of representative democracy, 'weak' and informal spaces as well as subaltern counter-publics should be established or further developed.⁶⁵ Moreover, as Seyla Benhabib suggests, such approach should be understood as 'democratic iteration', that is, transnational and complex processes through which democratic legitimacy is achieved by being "contested and contextualized, invoked and revoked, posited and positioned".⁶⁶ A democracy of disagreement suggests, then, that post-22/7 Norway should be politically organised on the basis of a guiding norm of disagreement and conflict rather than the Nordic consensus model of social democracy.⁶⁷ In fact, a well-functioning democratic order may be established only on the basis of the moral grammar of political conflicts, which, as already explained, presupposes the normative ideal of persons' embodied integrity.

From within the Mouffian framework, however, one has no access to any universal normative criterion on the basis of which it could have been possible to draw a line between legitimate and illegitimate forms of democratic disagreement with regard to the way in which it treats the universal ideal of

63 Elisabeth Eide, "Islamkritikerne knebles" [The Islam Critiques are Gaged], in Sigve Indregard (ed.), *Motgift: Akademisk respons på den nye høyreekstremismen* [Antidote: Academic Response to the New Right-wing Extremism]. Oslo: Flamme forlag, 2012, pp. 218–231.

64 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996/1993, p. 217.

65 Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy", in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*, New York: Routledge, 1997/1990, pp. 69–98.

66 Seyla Benhabib, *Dignity in Adversity: Human Rights in Troubled Times*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011/2009, p. 129.

67 Cf.: Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

embodied dignity or not. Although Mouffe introduces such distinctions as between agonism and antagonism and the political and politics, as well as the concept of ethico-political values, her stance seems to be based on a normative relativism. In Mouffe's case, then, this seems difficult because she rejects any moral norm—such as personal integrity—claiming as well that such norms are nothing else than the result of power hegemony. As an implication, her normative justification lacks the very fundament onto which the citizens' human dignity, along with the mutual respect of disagreement, can be based.

If this is true, Honneth's moral grammar of political conflicts seems to be a better candidate for the task of separating legitimate democratic conflicts from the illegitimate ones. Guided by this approach to post-terror Norway, which is to respect pluralism as well prevent extreme nationalism, I take Honneth's Heideggerian justification strategy—at least when reconstructed as recovering democratic ethical life, based on the moral ontology of persons' embodied dignity—as the most promising as far as it supports a common normative standard for citizens' equal political voice and participation.

5 Conclusion

Let me conclude this chapter by making the following three points. First, as regards Honneth, I have argued that among the at least two normative frameworks that can be reconstructed in his works, the later Honneth's Heideggerian moment—and thus the recovering of his original political insight—is the most promising as a 'democratic grammar'. The main way to express this point is by dwelling on the recognition and dignifying of a person's basic embodied needs—which I take to be grounded in one's vulnerability and dependency—as the normative grounding of the morality of democratic recognition struggle. The important lesson to be learned from this viewpoint is that if political conflicts should be looked upon as a potential resource, it presupposes a given, irremovable, and non-optional normative criterion of the recognition of every human person's integrity as a *sine qua non*.

Second, and relevant to post-terror Norway, on the basis of the morality of democratic recognition struggle, a moralisation and thus re-politisation of the democratic disenfranchisement as well as that the appeal to more democracy after 22/7 affords what I have called democracy of disagreement rather than the fear of citizens' democratic disagreement. The heart of what is at work here is the morality of political conflict, which is grounded in the abovementioned point about the recognition of each citizen's bodily vulnerability and inviolability.

The third, and last, point I would like to mention in this conclusion is the more general relevance of my argumentation regarding current debates on democracy. By calling attention to his original political insight, my intent has been to localise Honneth's recognitive approach to democracy as a middle way between consensual liberalism on the one hand and amoral agonism on the other. The nature of Honneth's political thought as democracy of disagreement may nevertheless be looked upon as a further development of the radical line of thought stretching from Hannah Arendt to Jürgen Habermas. The essence of the whole, then, is mirrored in the moral motivation and public struggle for the democratic recognition of fellow citizens' dignity.

Contextualising Religious Pain

Saba Mahmood, Axel Honneth, and the Danish Cartoons

Jonas Jakobsen

Should religious beliefs and holy figures be publicly respected? Is there, at the very least, a negative duty not to hurt the religious feelings of believers? Or, should the religious accept that injurious speech is the price they must pay to live in a secular, liberal democracy? These questions have haunted and divided the Danish and European public sphere(s) ever since a national newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, provoked international protests and demonstrations in 2005 and 2006 with its publication of 12 cartoons—most of them portraying the prophet Muhammad in ways that many Muslims found deeply offensive.

This chapter discusses one of the more innovative academic studies of the Danish cartoon controversy: Saba Mahmood's "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?".¹ I draw on Axel Honneth's theory of recognition to argue that Mahmood's analysis is problematic because it ignores three kinds of 'context': psychological, social and normative. I further argue that Honneth's theory provides us with the conceptual resources to contextualise Mahmood's account in these three areas. At the same time, however, Mahmood touches on crucial cultural-religious practices and modes of 'being in the world' that Honneth tends to neglect.

In *Section 1*, I present Mahmood's analysis of Muslim religious pain in terms of a 'moral injury': an emotional wound that occurs when a Muslim's attachment to the prophet is disturbed. Mahmood characterises the Danish cartoon controversy as a paradigmatic example of the infliction of such pain on Muslims in secular Europe, and she calls for a 'larger transformation' of the ethical sensibilities of the non-Muslim majority population. In *Section 2*, I

* I wish to thank Odin Lysaker, Sindre Bangstad, Andrew March, Jon Hellesnes, Jørgen Pedersen, Karim Sadek, Volker Heins, Lars Tønder, Andreas Føllesdal, Jørgen Pedersen, Siv Ellen Kraft, Espen Dahl, as well as members of the research group *Pluralism, Democracy, and Justice* at the University of Tromsø for their comments and criticisms.

1 Saba Mahmood, "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?", in Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*, Berkeley: The Townsend Papers in the Humanities, No. 2, 2009, pp. 64–100, p. 74.

point to three problems in her account: (a) the lack of ‘psychological context’ refers to Mahmood’s portrayal of Muslim religious pain in a closed emotional world, which ignores the psychological affinities between Muslim pain and other types of *human* pain; (b) the lack of ‘social context’ refers to Mahmood’s failure to situate Muslim religious pain within particular social contexts and struggles for recognition; (c) the lack of ‘normative context’, finally, refers to my claim that moral criticism of *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication cannot rely on references to religious feelings alone, but must take into account the broader recognitive context in which it occurred.

In Sections 3–7, I argue that a Honnethian approach can contextualise Mahmood’s account on all three points. To lay the groundwork for my reading, I critically interpret Honneth’s concepts of ‘disesteem’, ‘respect’ and ‘solidarity’ to take more clearly into account the fact that human beings are culturally and religiously attached, and vulnerable as such.² This fact is rightly stressed by Mahmood but downplayed by Honneth.

1 Saba Mahmood: Moral Injury as Muslim Pain

According to Mahmood, the reactions to the publication of the Danish cartoons among both Muslims and non-Muslims are exemplary of the standoff between religious and secular worldviews in European societies.³ However, Mahmood’s interpretation of this standoff is unique because she rejects the assumption that the cartoon controversy should be understood as a clash between the liberal value of freedom of speech, on one hand, and a religious taboo, on the other. For her, regardless of whether we defend or criticise the cartoons, it is misguided to believe that the controversy had anything to do with “a moral impasse between what the Muslim minority community considers being an act of blasphemy and the non-Muslim majority regards as an exercise of freedom of expression”.⁴ This description, she argues, is premised on “a [false] set of prior judgments about what kind of injury or offense the cartoons caused

2 I will not separate principally between ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ in this chapter, though I tend to use ‘culture’ when speaking in general terms about group-based values and traditions and ‘religion’ when discussing the particular case of the Danish cartoons and Muslim reactions to it.

3 Saba Mahmood, “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?”, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

4 *Ibid.*

and how such injury might be addressed in a liberal democracy".⁵ A central part of her argument relies on the claim that even 'liberals and progressives' who are sympathetic to Muslim sensibilities are incapable of *understanding* the type of moral injury involved:

For many liberals and progressives critical of the Islamophobia sweeping contemporary Europe, Muslim furor over the cartoons posed particular problems. While some of them could see the lurking racism behind the cartoons, it was the religious dimension of the Muslim protest that remained troubling. Thus, even when there was *recognition* [my emphasis] that Muslim religious sensibilities were not properly accommodated in Europe, there was nonetheless an *inability to understand* the sense of injury expressed by so many Muslims.⁶

For Mahmood, 'secular-liberal' discourse operates on conceptions of subjectivity, religiosity and harm that render the European majority blind and deaf to Muslim religious pain. She therefore analyses the cartoon controversy as a matter of "difficulties entailed in translating across different semiotic and ethical norms", and not as a conflict in which opposing parties *disagree* on the same subject (e.g., whether it is reasonable or necessary to insult religious feelings and 'the sacred' in a secular liberal democracy).⁷ For her, the debate over the cartoons was premised on a hegemonic ideology of what religion *is* and what constitutes moral injury: "the concept of moral injury I have analysed here remained unintelligible in the public debate over the Danish cartoons".⁸

It is difficult to know whether Mahmood's discussion of religious pain is meant to apply to *all* Muslims or merely to *some*. At times she speaks about "the kind of religiosity at stake in *Muslim* reactions to the cartoons",⁹ and at other times she discusses the feelings and reactions of "many Muslims".¹⁰ At any rate, the type of injury that she highlights springs from a disturbance of what she calls a "relationship of intimacy with the prophet", a relationship traditionally analysed in Islamic devotional literature.¹¹ In this literature, the

5 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 68 (my emphasis).

7 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*, p. 81 (my emphasis).

10 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

prophet's words and deeds are understood not so much as commandments or doctrines, but as "ways of inhabiting the world, bodily and ethically".¹² Muhammad is a 'moral exemplar' whom the religious subject attempts to emulate in eating, sleeping, speaking, walking, dressing, and so on: "these mimetic ways of realizing the Prophet's behavior are lived not as commandments but as virtues where one wants to ingest, as it were, the Prophet's persona into oneself".¹³ Consequently, she claims, it is inaccurate to explain the injury of (many) Muslims in terms of blasphemy and religious law, such as the prohibition of idolatry in mainstream Sunni Islam:

The notion of moral injury I am describing no doubt entails a sense of violation, but this violation emanates not from the judgment that "the law" has been transgressed, but from the perception that one's being, grounded as it is in a relationship of dependency with the prophet, has been shaken. For many Muslims, the offense the cartoons committed was not against a moral interdiction ("Thou shalt not make images of Muhammad"), but against a structure of affect, a habitus, that feels wounded.¹⁴

It probably comes as a surprise to some practising Muslims that their relation to the prophet is "best captured in Aristotle's notion of *schesis*".¹⁵ Without describing this notion in detail, Mahmood argues that it is relevant because it captures a certain way of relating to an icon that is neither 'communicative' nor 'representational'. Rather, this relation is 'assimilative', which means that the individual realises a set of pre-given bodily virtues through love for a perfect example. The *schesis*-model differs from modern forms of 'protestantised' and secular-liberal thought, which only conceptualise religious faith as a set of truth-claims in which the subject chooses to *believe* and therefore fail to understand Islamic religiosity as a set of *embodied practices and virtues*. Because secular-liberal thought, according to Mahmood, lacks the resources to understand embodied religion, it cannot conceptualise *why* it hurts a believer to see satirical representations of Muhammad. The secular mind-set insists that religious beliefs, unlike one's gender, sexual preferences or skin colour, are only *beliefs* and can therefore be changed—"just as easily as one might change

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

one's dietary preferences or one's name".¹⁶ Thus, religious beliefs can be taken lightly, and we do not have to consider their mockery a serious form of harm.

The conception of Islam as an embodied practice or habitus and the dichotomy between 'Islam' and 'the West' that are constitutive of Mahmood's work (despite her insistence to the contrary) share many affinities with the work of her former teacher, Talal Asad.¹⁷ Both Asad and Mahmood are scholars of Foucault in the sense that they analyse modern liberal democracies as 'disciplining' and exclusionary mechanisms of power. However, Asad and Mahmood focus in particular on how 'secular-liberal' conceptions of subjectivity, autonomy, religion and harm are alien or opposed to Islamic practices and discursive traditions.¹⁸ Mahmood therefore takes issue with European Muslims who appealed to European human rights law to argue that the Danish cartoons were a form of blasphemous speech that had to be suppressed:

To subject an injury predicated on distinctly different conceptions of the subject, religiosity, harm, and semiosis to the logic of civil law is to promulgate its demise (rather than to protect it). Mechanisms of the law are not neutral but are encoded with an entire set of cultural and epistemological presuppositions that are not indifferent to how religion is practiced and experienced in different traditions.¹⁹

Mahmood's point seems to be that the battle is already lost when Muslims try to translate their injury into Western legal categories, which can neither articulate nor protect Muslim religious pain. For Mahmood, the legal concepts of punishment and crime, as well as the moral language of 'blame, accountability and reparations' that dominated public protests against the cartoons, are grounded in secular-liberal discourse and therefore fail to capture authentic Muslim injury:

16 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

17 See for example: Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

18 For excellent critical discussions of Mahmood and Asad, respectively, see: Sindre Bangstad, "Contesting Secularism/s: Islam and Secularism in the work of Talal Asad", *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2009, pp. 188–208; Sindre Bangstad, "Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism After Virtue", in *Theory, Culture and Society: Explorations in Critical Social Science*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2011, pp. 28–54.

19 Saba Mahmood, "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?", *op. cit.*, p. 88.

This wound [caused by the cartoons] requires moral action, but its language is neither juridical nor that of street protest, because it does not belong to an economy of blame, accountability and reparations. The action that it requires is internal to the structure of affect, relations, and virtues that predisposes one to experience an act as a violation in the first place.²⁰

Finally, even though Mahmood does not always clearly distinguish between descriptive and normative statements, I understand that she makes two normative arguments. The first concerns the publication of the cartoons, which she treats as morally wrong. Mahmood therefore considers a European future in which the non-Muslim majority—not the Muslim minority—changes its ‘ethical sensibilities’:

Ultimately, the future of the Muslim minority in Europe depends not so much on how protocols of free speech might be expanded to accommodate its concerns as on a larger transformation of the cultural and ethical sensibilities of the Judeo-Christian population that undergird the cultural practices of secular-liberal law.²¹

I see no argument in Mahmood to support this normative stance other than the call to accommodate Muslim religious feelings: the cartoons were wrong *because* they injured Muslims.

The second normative argument is Mahmood’s critique of contemporary critical theory, in particular its self-understanding as a secular emancipatory practice. When Mahmood writes that “insomuch as the tradition of critical theory is infused with a suspicion, if not a dismissal, of religion’s metaphysical and epistemological claims, it would behove us to think ‘critically’ about this dismissal”,²² she means that critical theory *wrongly excludes* something from theorisation, notably the hidden pain and suffering of religiously attached Muslims.

I have omitted many details from my reading of Mahmood and perhaps simplified her analyses to an extent, but I hope to have given an impression of Mahmood’s portrayal of Muslim religious pain, as well as the way in which she understands this portrayal as a *critique* of secular-liberal discourse in general.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

2 Problems with Mahmood's Account

In my opinion, Mahmood accomplishes an important task in reminding us that Islamic faith may involve much more than prohibitions, commandments and *sharia*, particularly at a time when European public discourse on Islam is narrowly focused on Islamic law and its compatibility with liberal democratic principles. Furthermore, even though I would defend the claim that a cross-culturally robust critical theory must be independent of controversial religious truth-claims—for example, concerning the existence of God—I also believe that Mahmood is correct to argue that there are tendencies in contemporary critical theory to downplay the importance of religion for so many people. Honneth, for example, excludes millions of Americans and Europeans from 'Western culture' when arguing that, "as members of Western culture (...) we have all become naturalists. (...) There is no doubting Freud's prognosis that scientific enlightenment robs us of the compensation offered by religious faith and compels us to 'submit to the inevitable'".²³ In this section, however, I focus on three problems in Mahmood's account that, I argue, stem from a lack of contextualisation.

The lack of psychological context: Mahmood's account lacks a 'psychological context' because it fails to situate Muslim moral injury within a broader conception of *human* psychological vulnerability. Mahmood turns Muslim religious pain into a mystery by arguing that Muslim inner life is a unique category and thus incomprehensible to 'secular-liberals'. In my view, Muslims are not alone in feeling attachment to icons, symbols, texts, and places, and they are likewise not alone in experiencing hurt or distress when these attachments are publicly mocked or insulted. Thus, in his insightful discussion of Mahmood's text, the political theorist Andrew March notes that "the idea of emotional pain is really no mystery here at all. We feel pain at all kinds of things for all kinds of reasons. We attach ourselves to all kinds of symbols, figures, persons, and ideals in the assimilative way Mahmood describes, as the recent furore over 'Ground Zero' as 'hallowed ground' demonstrates".²⁴ Therefore, drawing on Honneth's cross-cultural and non-sectarian conception of moral injury, I argue that Muslim

23 Axel Honneth, "Disempowering Reality: Secular Forms of Consolation", in *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012/2010, p. 232.

24 Andrew March, "Speaking about Muhammad, Speaking for Muslims", in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2011, pp. 807–808. See also: Andrew March, "Speech and the Sacred: Does the Defence of Free Speech Rest on a Mistake about Religion?", *Political Theory*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2012, pp. 318–345.

religious pain is simply one manifestation of the pain that human beings feel when they are denied the recognition they believe they deserve.

The lack of social context: Mahmood's focus on Muslim pain in terms of an 'internal' religious matter ignores the fact that moral injuries are always experienced and interpreted in particular social contexts and relations. I therefore supplement her account with Honneth's conception of 'a struggle for recognition'. This notion, I argue, allows us to situate Muslim religious pain within particular social relations and contexts and to shed new light on many public expressions of Muslim offence.

The lack of normative context: As noted above, Mahmood sympathises with injured Muslims, but she provides no real argument for this sympathy. It is therefore difficult to know whether she thinks that we should *always* protect Muslim religious feelings or whether there was something special about the Danish cartoons that justifies her call for ethical sensitivity in this case. March expresses this bewilderment in the following way:

What 'transformation of the cultural and ethical sensibilities of the majority Judeo-Christian population' do we wish to see exactly—that they purify themselves of racist attitudes towards fellow citizens of Muslim cultural backgrounds, that they not misuse the secular license to insult religion as an alibi for creating a hostile environment for fellow citizens of Muslim cultural backgrounds, or that that they actually commit to *never* offending distinctly religious sensibilities held by Muslims by not transgressing against the sacred? (...) This is the precise question which I believe she needs to answer.²⁵

In the final section of this chapter (Section 6), I will argue that even though Honneth's concept of moral injury also raises ambiguous normative implications, his normative misconceptions of 'respect' and 'solidarity' nevertheless allow us to articulate a moral critique of *Jyllands-Posten's* publication without committing ourselves to the problematic view that Muslim feelings must always be protected against injury. Thus, my own Honnethian critique of the Danish cartoons is concerned with the recognitive context or 'environment' (March) surrounding the publication, not so much with the amount of religious pain it caused.

25 Andrew March, "Speaking about Muhammad, Speaking for Muslims", *op. cit.*, p. 820.

3 Axel Honneth: Moral Injury as the Misrecognition of Identities

If Mahmood is correct that “little thought has been given in academic and public debate to what constitutes moral injury in our secular world today”, then Axel Honneth’s work is an exception.²⁶ In his monograph *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth draws on Hegel’s early writings on recognition and works in modern social psychology (Georg Herbert Mead) and developmental psychology (Donald D. Winnicott) to develop a complex theory of human identity formation. This theory stresses our fundamental need for recognition from others and our consequent vulnerability to moral injury, which Honneth understands as *misrecognition*. Honneth further elaborates this theory in the collection of articles, *Disrespect*. In both works, he specifies three ways in which we are dependent on recognition, corresponding to three ways in which we can be morally injured:

- (a) As embodied persons with concrete needs and emotions, we are dependent on recognition in the form of emotional support in primary relationships such as love-relations, family relationships or friendship. Without such support, we are unable to develop basic emotional self-confidence. Moral injuries in this sphere, such as rape or torture, attack a person’s physical integrity.
- (b) As rationally accountable persons (persons who are able to act in accordance with reasoned choices and normative principles), we are dependent on recognition in the form of ‘equal respect’. Such respect is present first and foremost in the form of equal legal rights, protected by the state and its laws. Without the experience of being respected by others, we are unable to develop ‘self-respect’. According to Honneth, moral injuries in this sphere are ‘the denial of rights’ and ‘social exclusion’.
- (c) As persons who differentiate ourselves qualitatively from others in terms of traits, abilities and ways of life, we are dependent on recognition in the form of ‘social esteem’. Without such esteem, we are unable to develop ‘self-esteem’. Honneth describes moral injuries in this sphere as related to ‘the violation of honour’ and ‘the denigration of ways life’.

26 Saba Mahmood, “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?”, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

Serious forms of moral injury, Honneth further claims, are accompanied by psychological symptoms such as “being ashamed or enraged, feeling hurt or indignant”.²⁷ Such feelings can undermine our capacity to act and articulate our interests ‘without shame’ in the public sphere, but they can also be channelled productively into collective *struggles for recognition*, in which groups of injured subjects reclaim the recognition they (believe they) have been wrongly denied.

In his early works, Honneth ambitiously attempts to combine (a) a theory of the harmful effects of moral injury for human identity-formation with (b) a normative reconstruction of the social evolution of modern or ‘post-traditional’ societies and (c) an ethico-political vision of “post-traditional, democratic ethical life”.²⁸ He binds these elements together using the concept of the ‘struggle for recognition’. According to Honneth, experiences of moral injury, understood as experiences of misrecognition, have triggered a series of social struggles in modern history, including the workers’ movement, the women’s movement, and the American civil rights movement. All of these movements, in turn, contributed to the type of society or ‘recognition order’ that we usually describe as a Western liberal democracy. However, modern democracies still cause social suffering and injustice and exhibit their own pathologies, asymmetries and recognition conflicts. Honneth therefore outlines a normative vision of the direction that future struggles for recognition should take: a society that is “free from pain”, that is, a society of “unrestricted recognition”.²⁹

4 Psychological Contextualisation

In the remaining sections, I use Honneth’s theory of recognition to contextualise Mahmood’s analysis of Muslim religious pain. I call the first type of contextualisation ‘psychological’ because I attempt to situate Mahmood’s somewhat narrow analysis of *Muslim* injury within a broader, cross-cultural understanding of *human* psychology.

My guiding assumptions are that Muslim moral injury shares a strong ‘family resemblance’ (Wittgenstein) with other kinds of moral injury and that

27 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995/1992, pp. 134, 136.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 171.

this resemblance can best be formulated in terms of disappointed expectations of recognition. Muslims are intersubjective beings whose wellbeing and sense of identity is crucially affected by how they are met, perceived and treated by *others*. By stressing this claim, I do not wish to deny that many Muslims are emotionally attached to the prophet and attempt to emulate his actions in the way Mahmood describes. However, if Mahmood's Muslims did not also feel the need to be recognised by others *as* religiously attached in this way, then why did they care so deeply about the contents of a Danish newspaper?

Honneth's cross-cultural approach may help to demystify Muslim injury because it allows us to analyse this injury not as an Islamic curiosity, but as one example of the pain that human beings typically feel when they are denied the recognition they feel they deserve. According to Honneth, an action or expression becomes a moral injury if:

the person affected has no choice but to view it as an action that intentionally disregards an essential aspect of his or her well-being; it is not merely bodily pain as such, but the accompanying consciousness of not being recognized in one's own self-understanding that constitutes moral injury. (...) As in the case of a symbolic offense or humiliation, it is the disrespect of personal integrity that transforms an action or utterance into a moral injury.³⁰

Thus, if we understand religious feelings and attachments to be crucial to Muslims' 'self-understanding', sense of 'integrity' and 'wellbeing', then we can clearly explain Muslim responses to the Danish cartoons using Honneth's theory of recognition. But, do religious feelings and attachments have a place within Honneth's tripartite understanding of moral injury, as presented in this chapter?

The *first category*, the injury of being denied love in personal relations, is irrelevant in this context. The *second category*, the injury of being denied equal legal rights, is more difficult. Obviously, some Muslims find it disturbing that Danish and European laws do not adequately protect religious feelings and 'the sacred' and demand a more effective application of existing laws to provide such protection. Mahmood's view that these Muslims rely on 'secular' assumptions is strange because legal restrictions on blasphemous speech have widespread support in Muslim majority countries and Islamic political thought.

30 Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Verso, p. 134.

I agree with Honneth (in one of his few remarks on the cartoon controversy) that the Danish cartoons were within the scope of the legally permissible in a liberal democracy and that the controversy lies in Honneth's *third category* of vulnerability: the injury of being disesteemed or culturally insulted.³¹ Thus, I do not discuss the cartoons in legal terms in this chapter, but rather in terms of 'disesteem'.

Honneth uses the terms 'the denigration of ways of life', 'insult' and 'the violation of honour' to analyse the experience of disesteem:

Not until we consider these, as it were, evaluative forms of disrespect—the denigration of individual or collective ways of life—do we arrive at the form of behavior ordinarily labeled 'insulting' or 'degrading' today. As we saw, a persons' 'honor' or 'dignity', or, to use the modern term, 'status', refers to the degree of social esteem accorded to his or her manner of self-realization within a society's inherited cultural horizon. If this hierarchy of values is so constituted as to downgrade individual forms of life and manners of belief as inferior or deficient, then it robs the subjects in question of every opportunity to attribute social value to their own abilities.³²

Here, Honneth begins by defining disesteem so broadly that it could include almost any insult to people's beliefs or ways of life. The kind of religious pain Mahmood analyses, for example, is concerned with 'a way of life' and a 'manner of self-realisation', which she defines as a way of realising a set of pre-given virtues through bodily practices. Furthermore, although Mahmood argues that her notion of moral injury has nothing to do with cognitive 'beliefs'—since the emphasis on religion as belief, according to her, is a protestant invention—it seems clear that Muslim injury cannot be understood properly *without* reference to Islamic beliefs. If Mahmood's Muslims did *not* believe that there is a

31 Axel Honneth, "Anerkendelse kan man ikke gøre krav på" [Recognition cannot be demanded], in the Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*, March 4, 2006. For arguments against criminalising blasphemy and religious offence, see: Peter Jones, "Blasphemy, Offensiveness, and Law", in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1980, pp. 129–148; Sune Lægaard: "The Danish Cartoon Controversy: Offence, identity, Oppression?", *Political Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2007, pp. 481–498; Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate-Speech*, Harvard University Press 2012; Andrew March, "What's Wrong with Blasphemy?", *The New York Times*, September 25, 2012, available from http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/25/whats-wrong-with-blasphemy/?_r=0.

32 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

God, that Muhammad is his chosen prophet, and that Muhammad's words are therefore indisputably true, why would they take him to be an exemplary figure? Since Honneth treats 'manners of belief' as an aspect of human identity that can be misrecognised and therefore injured, his model seems to give us a more complex explanation of Muslim injury—an explanation that involves *emotions* as well as *beliefs* and *practices*.

5 Disesteem and Cultural Identities

However, Honneth's concept of disesteem can also be understood more narrowly. At the end of the above quote, he speaks about *individual* ways of life and argues that disesteem is harmful because it prevents misrecognised subjects from '*attributing social value to their own abilities*'. This claim is confusing because the misrecognition of cultural groups is not always directed at the 'abilities' of their individual members. For example, the Danish cartoons injured Muslims by insulting not their personal abilities, but the religious figures and beliefs with which they identify. The applicability of Honneth's idea of disesteem to this kind of injury, therefore, depends on how broadly or narrowly we interpret his concept.

In his later writings, Honneth explicitly supports the narrow interpretation. In his debate with Nancy Fraser in *Redistribution or Recognition?*, he detaches the discussion of esteem and disesteem from broad discussions of 'ways of life' and 'modes of self-realization' and focuses more narrowly on individuals' socio-economic contributions to a particular society.³³ Thus, the social contributions of, for example, a bus-driver, psychologist, or dentist—but not the beliefs or lifestyles of cultural groups—should be recognised by applying the meritocratic principle of 'individual achievement'.

As I see it, there are two main reasons for this shift in Honneth's thought. First, he has realised that there is no chance of reaching a consensus on the cultural meta-values (the overall 'value horizon') according to which cultural practices or beliefs are esteemed in a particular society.³⁴ Second, he has come to believe that individuals do not have an a priori *right* to have their culture esteemed by others: "there can be no legitimate claim to this sort of esteem,

33 Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003.

34 Axel Honneth, "Rejoinder", in Danielle Petherbridge (ed.), *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays*, Leiden: Brill 2011, pp. 391–421, pp. 406–407.

since it can only be the result of a process of judgment that escapes our control, just as sympathy or affection does”.³⁵

I agree with Honneth on both points. However, many experiences of disesteem cannot be understood through the frameworks of the denial of legal rights (Honneth's second sphere of recognition) and the misrecognition of individual contributions (Honneth's third sphere of recognition, narrowly understood). Some experiences of disesteem, rather, concern the insult or public downgrading of cultural minorities.³⁶ Accordingly, if we accept a narrow interpretation of the harm of disesteem, then Mahmood would be justified in arguing that Honneth does not provide the conceptual tools to analyse the injury that religiously devout Muslims experience in cases like the cartoon controversy.

In my view, therefore, a broader concept of *cultural disesteem* is appropriate for Honneth's theoretical framework, even if we can dismiss the idea of a homogenous value horizon and that of a right to 'cultural esteem'. I will therefore apply this concept in a *descriptive* (Section 6) and a *normative* (Section 7) sense.

6 Social Contextualisation

Mahmood's account of moral injury is purely 'internal' to the emotional world of the believing subject. In this section, I argue that situating Muslim injury within a Honnethian 'struggle for recognition' is necessary to understand many Muslims' articulations of injury and offense during the cartoon controversy.

35 Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition: A Response to Nancy Fraser", in Nancy Fraser and Axel, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso 2003, pp. 110–197, p. 168.

36 For other criticisms of the lacking attention to cultural identities, groups and struggles in Honneth, see: Maeve Cooke, "Beyond Dignity and Difference: Revisiting the Politics of Recognition", in *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2009, pp. 76–95; Volker Heins, "Three Meanings of Equality: The 'Arab Problem' in Israel", in *Res Publica*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 79–91; Bart van Leuwen: "A Formal Recognition of Social Attachments: Expanding Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition", in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2007, pp. 180–205; Dawid Owen, "Self-government and 'Democracy as Reflexive Co-operation': Reflections on Honneth's Social and Political Ideal", in David Owen and Bert van den Brink, *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 290–320.

Subjects who struggle for recognition aim to change or expand the institutions, social relations and practices, value horizons, and even laws and constitutions that they believe deny them the recognition they deserve. *The Struggle for Recognition* represents such struggles in the context of a particular society or nation state, but Honneth later applied his vocabulary to larger, international recognition conflicts. For example, he characterises Barack Obama's "astounding speech" at Cairo University in 2009 as an act of recognition of the Islamic world: "From greeting the audience in Arabic to his repeated mentions of the cultural achievements of Islam, he sought to remove the impression of disdain in many Arab countries during the Bush years".³⁷

Even though the Danish controversy had a transnational and global component, it also had local, national and regional components. Saudi-Arabian Muslims were probably not injured in exactly the same way as European ones. Take Danish Muslims as an example. For many of them, the controversy was not only about the particular injury of the cartoons, but also about their own future and place in Danish society.³⁸ Many Muslims were injured not only because the prophet was satirised, but also because they thought the publication demonstrated their status as a disesteemed minority in the Danish public sphere.³⁹ In Denmark and other European countries, at least since the attack on the Twin Towers on 9.11, Muslims have been repeatedly associated with violence and terrorism in the media and political discourse. They have been repeatedly identified as physical, cultural, economic and political threats and they have been exposed to openly racist or Islamophobic speech. For example, politicians have referred to Muslims as a "cancer" or compared the *Quran* to *Mein Kampf*.⁴⁰ Thus, even if Danish Muslims did not struggle for more 'esteem of Islam' in the cartoon controversy, they did struggle to end certain expressions of *disesteem* of Islam and Muslims.

37 Axel Honneth, "Recognition between States: On the Moral Substrate of International Relations", in *The I in We*, pp. 137–159, p. 143.

38 Heiko Henkel, "Fundamentally Danish? The Muhammad Cartoon Crisis as Transitional Drama", in *Human Architecture: Journal of The Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2010, pp. 67–81.

39 Jytte Klausen, *The Cartoons that shook the World*, Yale: Yale University Press, 2009.

40 See for example: Jonas Jakobsen, "Religion and (Mis)recognition: Axel Honneth and the Danish Cartoon Controversy", in Manuel Toscano and Jan Harald Alnes (eds.), *Varieties of Liberalism: Contemporary Challenges*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014; Jørgen S. Nielsen (ed.), *Islam in Denmark: The Challenge of Diversity*, New York: Lexington Books, 2012.

If I am correct that the pain felt by many Muslims in response to the cartoons is difficult to separate from other experiences of social pain and discontent, then it is not enough to analyse it only as a violated emotional bond between the believer and the prophet. Moreover, the vocabulary of a struggle for recognition seems to be more fitting with the statements of many Muslims. For example, The International Union of Muslim Scholars' statement on the cartoon affair describes injured religious feelings *and* a socio-political struggle against "organized anti-Islam campaigns that aim at spreading hatred of and contempt for Islam, its sanctities, and its believers".⁴¹ The same statement also conceives the cartoons as an attack on the "good relations" that Muslims normally have with non-Muslims and the Western world. A letter from the Danish Muslim Community to the ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Copenhagen interprets the publication as "part of propaganda and advertisement campaign".⁴² In his response to the Danish cartoons, the influential defender of 'Euro-Islam', Tariq Ramadan, wrote about the need for "respect" and "civility" in multicultural Europe.⁴³

Mahmood might object that the Muslims who publicly struggled for recognition were not really injured or not injured in an authentically Islamic way. This hypothetical response is one way of reading her claim that Muslim injury belongs neither to 'the language of street protests' nor to that of 'blame, accountability and reparations'. In my opinion, such a view, whether it is Mahmood's or not, runs the risk of paternalism: of telling people what they feel instead of listening to what they say.

It should be noted that I have not been arguing that Muslim experiences of offence are always reasonable or that Muslim struggles for recognition are always legitimate. Honneth himself explains the attacks on the Twin Towers on 9.11 in terms of a struggle for recognition,⁴⁴ and he writes that "the social movements of today demanding recognition of their value convictions include not only peaceful groups like feminists or marginalised minorities, but also racist and nationalist movements such as Farrakhan's Nation of Islam and German

41 "IUMS (International Union of Muslim Scholars) Statement on Insulting Cartoons", available from: <http://www.central-mosque.com/fiqh/iumsttmnt.htm>.

42 The letter was translated into Danish and published by the newspaper *Politiken*, <http://politiken.dk/incoming/article163883.ece>. The author translated the quote back into English.

43 Tariq Ramadan, "Cartoon Conflicts", *The Guardian*, February 6, 2006. Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/feb/06/homeaffairs.comment>.

44 Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, "Introduction", in *Redistribution or Recognition?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–5, p. 2.

skinheads".⁴⁵ Certainly, there have been several unreasonable and, seen from a liberal democratic perspective, illegitimate responses to the Danish cartoons, such as threats or acts of violence.

My intention in the previous sections has mainly been interpretive or analytic, meaning that I have not attempted to evaluate *Jyllands-Posten's* publication or particular responses to them. In the final section, however, I make a normative contribution to the discussion of the Danish cartoons by asking the following question: should we morally criticise *Jyllands-Posten's* cartoons even though the newspaper had a legal right to publish them?

7 Normative Contextualisation

I have argued thus far that Honneth's early notions of moral injury and the struggle for recognition, when understood in a sufficiently broad sense, allow us to contextualise Mahmood's account of Muslim religious pain 'psychologically' and 'socially'.

The final type of contextualisation I argue for is normative. Mahmood demonstrates that the cartoons injured Muslims and uses this argument to call for a "larger transformation of the cultural and ethical sensibilities of the Judeo-Christian population".⁴⁶ However, Mahmood does not guard against a reader inferring, based on her appeal, that Muslim sensibilities should *never* be offended. Therefore, unless Mahmood is willing to claim that Muslim religious feelings should always be protected, she must explain why we should be concerned with Muslim pain in this case, but not necessarily in all others.

I argue that a moral criticism of *Jyllands-Posten* cannot rely directly or solely on the fact that Muslims were religiously offended, but must take the *recognitive context* of the publication into account. First, however, some clarifications of my use of Honneth's theory as a normative frame are necessary. I wish to avoid two problematic lines of normative argumentation in Honneth: a 'psychological' line and a 'historical-reconstructive' one.

The psychological line, found primarily in Honneth's early works, implies that feelings of moral injury—'the experience of not being recognised in one's own self-understanding'—are always morally justified and that, correspondingly, inflictions of offense on others are always morally wrong. Nancy Fraser attacks this line of argumentation and accuses Honneth of holding the absurd view that "everyone has an equal right to social esteem", thus making the very

45 Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition", *op. cit.*, p. 121.

46 Saba Mahmood, "Religious Reason and Secular Affect", *op. cit.*, p. 89.

idea of esteem “meaningless”.⁴⁷ Even though Fraser misreads Honneth in certain respects, this criticism is not entirely without foundation in his own formulations. Honneth asserts, for example, that “moral injustice is at hand *whenever*, contrary to their expectations, human subjects are denied the recognition they feel they deserve”.⁴⁸ Clearly, if *all* psychological feelings of misrecognition had justice on their side, then we would have no way of evaluating conflicts in which all the involved parties felt misrecognised and offended. Even more problematically, we would be confronted with the fact that individuals may feel misrecognised for all kinds of parochial, self-serving and morally dubious reasons. Thus, although we normally should take co-citizens’ experiences of moral injury seriously, subjective experiences of misrecognition cannot serve as the normative foundation for a critical theory of justice.

For these reasons, Honneth has later distanced himself from the early tendency to ‘psychologise’ normative questions.⁴⁹ In his latest major work, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, he employs a different argumentative strategy, which I term ‘historical-reconstructive’: Honneth now minimises his focus on ‘identity’ and moral feelings and analyses justice in terms of whether “the highly developed Western societies”⁵⁰ have realised their constitutive value—*individual freedom*—in their institutions and practices. In an impressive series of critical, historical-reconstructive analyses, Honneth demonstrates that we have largely failed to understand and realise the *social* preconditions for individual freedom in the three spheres of personal relations, the market, and democratic will-formation (corresponding to three types of ‘social freedom’). Even though these analyses are insightful and fascinating, I think they are insufficient if understood as a form of normative argumentation. In a society containing many different traditions and value orientations, justice is not simply a matter of measuring the success of the dominant tradition (‘the West’) in realising its own values. The stigmatisation of minorities, for example, is not wrong *because* it contradicts Western values, but because no one deserves to be stigmatised. Thus, postcolonial theorists like Mahmood would be correct to criticise a theory of justice that relies on a comprehensive (and Hegelian)

47 Nancy Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation”, in *Redistribution or Recognition?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–109, p. 32.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 71 (my italics).

49 See: Luc Boltanski and Axel Honneth, “Soziologie der Kritik oder Kritische Theorie? Ein Gespräch mit Robin Celikates”, in Rahel Jaeggi and Tilo Wesche (eds.), *Was ist Kritik?*, Frankfurt am Main Suhrkamp Verlag, pp. 81–114, 2009.

50 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriss einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*. Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011, p. 470 (my translation).

theory of Western freedom, and that refers exclusively to Western history in its historical examples, for being culturally biased—at least at the level of rhetoric and justification. Honneth does admit that we need to morally justify our values and norms rather than rely on their social acceptance. However, in my view, such a justification has to rely on *context- and history-transcending normative principles* in order to be acceptable across regional and cultural divides. Which principles, then?

As an alternative to Honneth's psychological and historical-reconstructive lines of argumentation, I base my discussion of *Jyllands-Posten's* publication on the principle of *respect for human beings as free and equal*. This normative principle is present in all of Honneth's work in different ways. What Honneth does very convincingly is to show that the realisation of our status as free and equal persons depends on the quality and inclusiveness of the social practices and institutions in which we participate and live our lives. In *Das Recht der Freiheit*, he makes a robust defence of the idea that our liberal rights and freedoms presuppose a network of intersubjective recognition to fulfil their purpose; freedom of speech, for example, hardly makes sense if we constantly insist on our legal *right* to speak instead of communicating with each other.⁵¹ And he forcefully demonstrates that democratic will-and opinion formation among free and equal citizens depends on a political culture that maintains democratic virtues and feelings of solidarity among the citizens, but without relying on the “cultural hegemony of the dominant groups”, as in the early days of the nation state.⁵²

What interests me here is how and when expressions of cultural disesteem can be said to violate the normative principle of respect for free and equal persons. Obviously, not all *expressions* of disesteem can reasonably be characterised as violations of our status as free and equal (i.e., you may reject my cultural beliefs as false or misunderstood without disrespecting my status as a free and equal person). However, some extreme expressions of disesteem target the equal moral status of human beings by attacking the cultural groups with which they identify. As Honneth writes, “the continuum of examples [of disesteem] ranges from the harmless case of not greeting another person to the serious case of stigmatisation”.⁵³

For example, ‘Islamophobic’ speech usually contains some or all of the following elements: (a) false or exaggeratedly negative claims about Islam and Muslims; (b) the homogenisation of Muslims as a group (‘they are all the

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 154–155.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 545 (my translation).

53 Axel Honneth, *Disrespect*, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

same'); and (c) conspiracy thinking (e.g., according to the so-called 'Eurabia' literature, which inspired Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, there has been a secret pact between Western 'multiculturalists' and the 'Muslim world' to Islamise Europe). If the public sphere abounds with such speech, it becomes difficult for Muslim citizens to go about their business and participate in social and political life with the assurance that, despite all disagreements and differences, they will receive basic respect as free and equal co-citizens.

I argue that we should morally criticise extreme examples of disesteem, such as hate speech and group defamation, not because all cultural groups deserve esteem, but because all individuals deserve basic respect as free and equal persons. In *Redistribution or Recognition?* Honneth interestingly interprets equal respect as a 'procedural virtue of respectful interaction':

As a member of a cultural minority, one [should] not only enjoy equal political rights, but also the real opportunity to gain public attention for one's value convictions. What this could mean can best be explained in terms of a procedural virtue of democratic institutions that is measured by their capacity for respectful interaction with cultural minorities.⁵⁴

I agree with Honneth that formal state institutions should maintain certain 'procedural virtues of respect' when interacting with cultural minorities. However, why not expand this requirement to the *non-formal spheres of democratic interaction between citizens*? Do not more informal ways of speaking with—and about—each other in the public sphere also require certain virtues of respectful argumentation and listening? In my view, far from implying that cultural-religious traditions cannot be critically discussed, such virtues are a condition of possibility for intercultural debate and critique: without minimal fairness and respect in our discursive encounters and contestations, citizens from different cultural-religious backgrounds are unlikely to trust one another, listen to one another, and open themselves up to the possibility that they could learn something from one another (in the Habermasian sense of a democratic *learning process*).

Based on my tripartite definition of 'islamophobia', citizens who want to critically discuss issues related to Islam should be required to (a) seek reliable knowledge about Islam and Muslims rather than rely on popular prejudices; (b) acknowledge the existence of many different types of Muslims and interpretations of Islam (i.e., avoid stereotyping and stigmatising); and (c) evaluate

54 Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition", *op. cit.*, p. 166.

fellow Muslim citizens according to what they *do and say*, not according to fears about what they *might* do and say.

If we accept these three procedural virtues of respect, we must then ask whether some or all of the Danish cartoons violated them. Did any of the cartoons, for example, promote false or hateful stereotypes about Muslim citizens? It should first be noted that not all of the cartoons satirised the Muslim prophet. One is an innocent, naturalist portrayal of Muhammad; one ridicules *Jyllands-Posten* and calls its journalists a ‘bunch of reactionary provocateurs’ (in Arabic); and one mocks a well-known Danish ‘critic of Islam’, Kåre Bluitgen.⁵⁵ That being said, most of the cartoons do satirise the prophet and insinuate that he is aggressive, an oppressor of women, or diabolical (with horns). The most controversial cartoon portrays him with a bomb in his turban, with a lit fuse, and the *shahadah* (the Islamic creed) written on the bomb.

Some commentators read these satirical cartoons as straightforwardly racist and Islamophobic. Tariq Modood, for example, writes, “[the cartoons] are not just about one individual Muslim per se—just as a cartoon about Moses as a crooked financier would not be about one man but a comment on Jews. And just as the latter would be racist, so are the cartoons in question”.⁵⁶ Seyla Benhabib has compared some of the cartoons with anti-Semitic cartoons in the Nazi magazine *Der Stürmer*.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, who decides that a cartoon of Muhammad is about *Muslims* rather than a critique of religious ideology? Kurt Westergaard, who drew the infamous ‘bomb in the turban’ cartoon, insists that his work targets extremists who misuse Islam for violent purposes, not ordinary Muslims. There is room for interpretation because the work in question is a cartoon, not a propositional claim about ‘Muslims’. I therefore agree with Jeremy Waldron that “in and of themselves, the cartoons can be regarded as a critique of Islam rather than libel of Muslims; they contribute, in their twisted way, to a debate about the connection between the prophet’s teachings and the more violent aspects of modern jihadism”.⁵⁸

55 For an interesting discussion of those ‘other’ cartoons, which did not satirise the prophet, see: Lars Tønder: “Freedom of Expression in an Age of Cartoon Wars”, in *Contemporary Political Theory*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2011, pp. 255–272.

56 Tariq Modood, “The Liberal Dilemma: Integration or Vilification?”, in *International Migration*, Vol. 44, No. 5, 2006, pp. 17–22, p. 4.

57 Melina Duarte and Jonas Jakobsen, “Reassessing Human Rights: An Interview with Seyla Benhabib”, in *Norsk Filosofisk Tidsskrift* [Norwegian Journal of Philosophy], Vol. 48, No. 2, 2013, pp. 171–183.

58 Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

However, even those of us who are not sure how to evaluate the content of the cartoons may have other reasons to criticise the publication. Honneth's concept of 'solidarity' is relevant here because it allows us to focus on the *recognitive context* of the cartoons. In *Das Recht der Freiheit*, as we saw, he conceives democratic solidarity in terms of an inclusive and well-functioning 'political culture'. In the early works, he uses the notion of solidarity to characterise a type of social relationship, or in the words of Joel Anderson, a "cultural climate",⁵⁹ which secures for all citizens a fair chance in the permanent struggle for esteem: "[solidarity means that] every individual, *without any group being systematically disadvantaged*, receives the chance to experience his or her achievements and abilities as being valuable to society".⁶⁰ This quote is a good example of how Honneth reduces esteem to a matter of individual 'achievements and abilities'. Nevertheless, I believe that the same moral logic should characterise the struggle for cultural esteem: no one is guaranteed cultural esteem or the same amount of esteem as others, but the recognitive backdrop for our interactions and struggles for esteem, should not *systematically disadvantage* any particular group. Again, the moral reason is not that we want to protect cultural groups or identities as such, but that the principle of equal respect for all human beings forbids us to discriminate or disadvantage individuals simply because of their cultural or religious belongings (unless, of course, these belongings violate the principle of equal respect themselves).

One of the central arenas in which cultural minorities are typically 'systematically disadvantaged' (Honneth) is the democratic public sphere, which is heavily influenced by the ways in which journalists and editors frame the news and by the 'experts' and spokespersons they choose to exclude or include in particular cases. A growing body of research suggests that the coverage of Islam and Muslims in European countries, and certainly in Denmark, has been characterised by structural asymmetries such as over-problematisation, stereotypes, distortion of views, exclusion of arguments or relevant spokespersons, and uncritical reliance on biased 'experts on Islam'.⁶¹ Other studies

59 Joel Anderson, "Translator's Introduction", in Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. x–xxi, p. xvii.

60 Axel Honneth, *Disrespect*, *op. cit.*, p. 261 (emphasis added).

61 See for example Sindre Bangstad, "Inclusion and Exclusion in the Mediated Public Sphere: the Case of Norway and its Muslims", in *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2013, pp. 356–370; Christian Rostbøll, "The Use and Abuse of 'Universal Values' in the Danish Cartoon Controversy", in *European Political Science Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2010, pp. 401–422; Christian Rostbøll, "Autonomy, Respect and Arrogance in the Danish Cartoon Controversy", in *Political Theory*, Vol. 37, No. 5, 2009, pp. 623–648; Tim Jensen, "The Cartoon Crisis Revisited: A Danish Perspective", in *Ari*, No. 65, 2006; Peter

point to the islamophobic (irrational, fear-driven) turn that populist political discourse has taken in European countries in recent years.⁶² If these analyses are correct, then the Danish cartoons emerged in a political culture in which all of my three virtues of respect were systematically violated. Thus, the publication was not a singular event but—whether intentionally or not—part of a Danish and European discourse on Islam and Muslims that was already permeated with intolerable forms of disrespect.

Drawing on Honnethian intuitions about respect, solidarity, and ‘procedural virtues’, I would argue that *Jyllands-Posten* should have been more attentive to structural mechanisms of exclusion and misrecognition in the public sphere. If *Jyllands-Posten* had shown solidarity with Muslims by not publishing the most offensive cartoons, this action would not have implied bowing to those who claim that Islam must be above criticism and insult. Rather, it would have been an attempt to avoid further alienation of the Muslim minority in Denmark and Europe, based on an assessment of the current cultural and political climate (what I have called the ‘recognitive context’). In other words, the main reason why we should care about Muslim pain in this case is not that Muslims’ ‘relationship of intimacy with the prophet’ was disturbed (Mahmood), but that pain as well as recognition were asymmetrically distributed at the time of the publication—to the disadvantage of Muslims.⁶³

At the same time, Honneth’s early vision of a society ‘free from pain’—a society of ‘unrestricted recognition’—is not realisable in multicultural societies.⁶⁴ The public sphere is not always a pleasant place, and discussion with fellow citizens with whom one deeply disagrees can be a frustrating experience. Experiences of non-recognition and misrecognition are unavoidable. The question is therefore not how to completely eradicate social pain, but *which types of pain we can live with and which we cannot*. I believe that European Muslims (and other believers) must live with some amount of pain

Hervik: *The Misrecognition of Muslims in Danish Television News*, 2006, can be downloaded at http://hervik.stadesolutions.com/dokument/Internet_version_february_2006.doc.

62 See for example Jürgen Habermas, “Leadership and Leitkultur”, *The New York Times*, October 28, 2010; Martha Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

63 This argument, of course, only applies to socio-political contexts in which Muslims are a publicly misrecognised minority and not to majority Muslim countries where Islamic values and norms are hegemonic.

64 For a convincing argument along these lines, see: Bert van den Brink: “Recognition, Pluralism and the Expectation of Harmony: Against the Ideal of an Ethical life ‘Free from Pain’”, in Danielle Petherbridge (ed.), *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays*, pp. 155–176.

related to blasphemy and 'religious feelings' in the future. At the same time, no one should live with the pain of stigmatisation or marginalisation. I hope, therefore, that attempts to offend Muslim sensibilities for its own sake and attempts to justify Islamophobic speech by calling it 'critique of religion' will be publicly criticised and marginalised in tomorrow's recognition struggles.

Inquiries into Identity

The Struggle for Recognition in Erik Allardt's Study of Ethnic Conflicts

Arvi Särkelä

In this chapter I wish to contribute to the investigation of the relation of Axel Honneth's work on recognition to Nordic social democracy by a certain reversal of perspective: Instead of applying Honneth's recognition-theoretical apparatus on Nordic conditions and problems, I am asking whether the tradition of Nordic welfare sociology might have something to offer to the resolution of recognition-theoretical problems today. In the case of Erik Allardt's 1979 book on *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialised Society*, I believe this to be so. The book by the Finnish sociologist presents, namely, a study on ethnic conflicts in his coeval Western Europe, presenting them as struggles for recognition.

The hypothesis of this article is that Allardt's inquiry might help, first, to clarify a specific discourse on recognition that Honneth finds particularly difficult to integrate in his own perspective.¹ Second, I wish to do this without falling prey to the fallacies of the political jargon of identity politics. Furthermore, Allardt's use of a recognition theoretical vocabulary, thus reconstructed, might also reveal novel ways of linking the concept of (a struggle for) recognition to other central notions of social theory.

For the contemporary reader of theories of recognition, however, Allardt's study is as astonishing as it is challenging: Its head-on empirical approach makes it hard to see from where he derives his conception of recognition. The author himself neither presents his conception in any systematic way nor does he give any clue about the sources for his use of the concept—there is not a single reference to be found in the book to any other work, in which the

* I am grateful to the participants at the Nordic Summer University (NSU) in Turku and the philosophical seminar at University of Jyväskylä in February 2012. I would also like to thank Federica Gregoratto, Arto Laitinen, Just Serrano Zamora, and the editors of this volume, Odin Lysaker and Jonas Jakobsen, for challenging and illuminating comments and questions, most of which have unfortunately found no sufficient further elaboration in the article. I thank Peter Kraus for my important first discussions about Allardt's study.

1 Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003), *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, pp. 161–170.

concept of recognition would be elaborated systematically. However, as soon as one is forced to give up the quest for a well-defined philosophical positioning, the reading gets compelling: What is truly attractive in Allardt's inquiry is precisely the fact that he comes across the concept of a struggle for recognition unpretentiously in the course of an empirical study in a period, when the vocabulary of recognition still had not penetrated the multicultural discourse.

I will approach this empirical inquiry as a challenge to philosophical thought about recognition. It is important to note that Allardt nowhere claims to be presenting anything like a theory of recognition. But he does, indeed, in his study find a certain recognition-talk to be the best way of articulating the results of his research. Taking Allardt's study as a challenge to philosophical thought thus raises the question: what kind of a conception of recognition does Allardt's empirical inquiry on ethnic conflicts imply?

In a first part of the article I will in nine steps reconstruct Allardt's conception of ethnic struggles for recognition. Then, in a second part, I will sketch out the consequences of this philosophically reconstructed conception for his broader diagnosis of ethnic relations of post-Second World War Europe and his politics of recognition. In a final third part, I will then make an attempt at pointing out some fruitful effects that the Allardtian approach might have on our contemporary dealings. I suggest that Allardt's sociological research, on the one hand, verifies an instrumentalist, processualist and hermeneutic account of struggles for recognition, which does not need to fall back on some antecedent standards of valuation—be they the authenticity of identity, moral facts, or transcendental norms—in order to validate its outcome. On the other, Allardt's account, philosophically elaborated, might turn out to present valuable conceptual resources for a diagnosis of the rise of right-wing populism in the Nordic countries.

1 **Sorting Out Aspects of Allardt's Conception of Recognition**

Allardt distinguishes, first of all, between two different kinds of recognitive relations that may be of relevance for a theory of ethnicity. First, there are *intra*-ethnic relations of recognitions: Persons are recognised as members of an ethnic group by other members of the same group. Allardt's study, however, does not claim to contain any such theory. Instead, Allardt turns his interest to the second kind of recognitive relation relevant for the study of ethnicity: The subject matter of a theory of ethnic conflicts is according to Allardt reducible to the study of recognitive relations between ethnic groups. Such recognition underlies *inter*-ethnic interaction. Allardt's study is mainly focusing on asym-

metrical relations between dominating and dominated ethnic groups. In the following I will highlight nine aspects of the conception of recognition implied in that study.

1.1 *Dialogical Recognition*

According to Allardt ethnicity becomes politically salient and sociologically relevant, when ethnic self-categorisations and external categorisations conflict.² Such is a case of ethnic misrecognition. At this point, it is important to note merely the fact that in Allardtian ethnic conflicts both the dominated and the dominating group claim recognition. Allardt seems thus to conceive relations of recognition in a manner anticipating what Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen later have called a 'two way complex of recognitive attitudes', meaning that a mere recognitive attitude of one person or group towards another does not suffice to constitute a relation of recognition.³ On the contrary, according to a dialogical conception of recognition, it takes the attitudes of both parties to constitute a relation of recognition. In other words, in order for a recognitive relation to exist between two groups, one group's recognitive attitude towards the other group must be recognised by this other group as relevant. The basic structure of recognition in Allardt can thus, at this point of argument, be said to be dialogical: Group A recognises group B as X, whereas group B recognises group A as a relevant or authoritative recogniser of X's. Recognition, according to such a dialogical conception, is to be understood as a complex of mutual acts and attitudes.

This shows that Allardt, albeit lacking any direct reference to Hegel or Hegelian literature on recognition and preceding Axel Honneth's work by more than a decade, may be on this point placed in the same Hegelian tradition of theorising recognition as the latter. It is important to also note that this dialogical and mutual character of recognition does not necessarily imply that the relation is symmetrical or the recognition free. One might imagine several constellations, in which a dominated group under constraint is in need of recognition by a dominant group and recognises it as its superior, whereas the latter recognises the subservient group merely as a competent recogniser of its

2 Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society: A Comparative Study of the Linguistic Minorities in Western Europe*, Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1979, p. 32.

3 Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, "Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons," in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds.), *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 38.

superiority. If such asymmetrical relations are deemed to fail, is another question. This kind of recognitive relation is paradigmatically exposed in Hegel's story about Master and Bondsman in his *Phenomenology*.

1.2 *Processual Recognition*

A second aspect of Allardt's approach—its processuality—also separates it from the underlying social ontological commitments of most non-Hegelian, everyday political jargon accounts of an identity politics of recognition: Allardt does not describe recognition essentially as an act or a condition. Rather, like in Hegel's robust understanding of the dialogicality of recognition as twofold significance (*Doppelsinnigkeit*), in Allardt's story too recognition seems to be rendered as a series of mutual acts, or even better, as a complex process of mutual acts and attitudes: Recognition is something that happens in time, has a number of phases, has a certain 'logic' or 'grammar', constitutes a sort of achievement and induces not only change in the relationship between the parties in question, but also transforms their self-relations and their shared life-world.⁴

1.3 *Categorical Recognition*

But what kind of process is recognition? And what is the precise structure of its dialogicality in Allardt? Curiously, to Allardt it is first of all a process of categorisation. Allardt describes misrecognition in ethnic conflicts as a qualitative mismatch between the self-categorisations of an ethnic group on the one hand and the external categorisation of it by a more dominant group on the other.⁵ It often seems that Allardt understands recognition as not much more than a process of intersubjective categorisation between groups of persons. Indeed, Allardt links categorisation very close together with recognition and misrecognition in passages like this:

In today's Europe, callousness or prejudice towards territorial linguistic minorities usually (...) displays itself as unwillingness to recognise minority identities. The minorities ask for categorisations while the majorities decline to emit them.⁶

4 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 111.

5 Cf.: Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–33, 43–51, 66–69.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Formally, then, recognition would be expressed thus: A categorises B as under the identity X, whereas B categorises A as a relevant categoriser of X-identities.

It appears to make a difference for what one understands recognition to be whether one takes values to generate norms and reasons for treating people in a certain way or norms and reasons to justify evaluations. The categorisation-based account pointed towards in Allardt's inquiry seems to position him somewhat uniquely in the context of contemporary value-based and norm-based models.⁷ Allardt's conception enjoys the advantage of remaining open for both options: Categorisations can involve the attribution or affirmation of the value of a group of persons, but categorisations might as well involve norms for such treatments and standards for such evaluations. This categorisation-based account clearly distinguishes Allardt from the Honnethian value-based approach.

1.4 *Strict Recognition*

At this point, I think, it is relevant to ask: What exactly is recognised here, categorisations or groups? Allardt observes in his study that ethnic conflicts begin in general by some hegemonic group setting up some standards of public life that involve the kind of categorisations of a dominated ethnic group that the latter group cannot endorse; in contrast to this, the dominated group, in turn, claims recognition of its right to self-categorisation.⁸ On the one hand, the object of recognition seems to be *rights, standards, demands* and *categorisations*. On the other, we have the mutual recognition of *groups* as authoritative categorisers, bearers of rights and duties etc.

It seems, however, that this ambiguity would not only be easily resolved within the framework of Allardt's inquiry, but that he would have already committed himself to the second option of ethnic groups being the relevant kind of objects of recognition: If, namely, recognition is to be understood dialogically, as is often implied in Allardt's study, then rights, standards, demands, categorisations and classifications cannot be objects of recognition, since they are not

7 For value-based models, see: Axel Honneth, "Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions", in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2002, pp. 499–519; Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011; Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, "Analyzing Recognition", *op. cit.* For norm-based models, see: Robert B. Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009; Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

8 Cf.: Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

potential recognisees as demanded by the dialogical conception: that is, they are not the kind of entities with the capacity of recognising back and thus constituting a recognitive relation. Ethnic groups, by contrast, do fulfil the condition of being recognisees capable of recognising the recogniser back. What is to be recognised in Allardt would thus be the ethnic group, not categorisations or other normative entities.

Laitinen has called conceptions of recognition that are subjected to such conditions strict as opposed to broad notions of recognition, which in turn accept normative entities such as values and norms as objects of recognition.⁹ According to a strict notion, being a recogniser or a recognisee in relevant cases involves understanding certain conceptual distinctions that are relevant to such recognitive cases, for instance between merit and mere success, right and privilege, insult and injury etc. Monological conceptions of recognition, not taking into account the attitudes, values, etc., of the recognisee as constitutive for recognition, could thus be either strict or broad, whereas coherently dialogical conceptions would be committed to being strict. According to a strict dialogical conception for a treatment to count as recognition there has to be "at least implicit communication concerning the evaluative features of the recipient".¹⁰ Because being most minimally a relevant categoriser is an evaluative feature, such classificatory practices that Allardt has in mind must be understood to come up to this criterion. That Allardt's study points towards a strict notion also situates him in the context of a Honnethian type of recognition theorising as Honneth also has accepted the strict notion.¹¹

Yet the commitment to a strict conception of recognition does not exclude acknowledgement, endorsement or acceptance of normative entities from being essential to recognitive relations. On the contrary, conflicts about categorisations seem to have a strong link to the Allardtian type recognition. Somebody rejecting the rights of Swedish speaking Finns to use their mother tongue at Finnish universities can at least be understood as misrecognising me as one who categorises himself as a Finn having the right to use the second national language in public offices. Thus it seems that in an Allardtian vocabulary, disputes about categorisation can at least put the recognitive status of being a relevant (self-)categoriser into jeopardy. Allardt's ambiguous formulations about recognising groups vis. recognising normative entities would then

9 Arto Laitinen, "Interpersonal Recognition: A Response to Value or a Precondition of Personhood?", in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2002, pp. 463–478, p. 466 f.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 467.

11 Cf.: Axel Honneth, "Grounding Recognition", *op. cit.*

be clarified by understanding the recognition of an ethnic group as a relevant categoriser as implying some kind of an acknowledgement of the rights, standards, categorisations and classifications it endorses. In fact, this looks to be the kind of solution Allardt anticipates in some passages, for instance when he observes that demanding recognition “implies (...) asking for some degree of autonomy”.¹² That the Allardtian approach is categorisation-based could then mean holding categorisations to give reasons for treating people, that is, recognising them, in a certain way. Recognising someone ethnically would then be to treat this person in accordance with him or her being of the ethnic category X. X could then involve most anything, such as having certain rights and duties, having certain merits or value or being of a special significance for certain people.

1.5 *Generative-Responsive Recognition*

If, then, recognition is a treatment in accordance with a category, do struggles for recognition respond to pre-existing categorisations or do they generate new ones? It is important to emphasise that Allardt’s study first and foremost deals with struggles for recognition, that is, with recognitive cases, in which prevailing categorisations have broken down. As already mentioned, struggles for recognition enter the scene when there is some sort of mismatch between the self- and external categorisations of an ethnic group.¹³ As such, struggles for recognition are obviously responsive to categorisations. More precisely, they are to be understood as responses to unsuccessful or contested categorisations. However, these categorisations having failed and being contested, Allardtian struggles for recognition seem also to point toward new categorisations, which would somehow replace or even supersede the old ones. As such, struggles for recognition are generative of categorisations too.

1.6 *Instrumental Recognition*

Thus, Allardt’s study underpins a conception of struggles for recognition mediating between, what could be called, problematic categorisations and categorisations-in-view. Struggles for ethnic recognition would be, according to such an account, responsive to categorisations, which have somehow become problematic, and generative of categorisations, which would be (at least intended as) instrumental to the resolution of an ethnic conflict.

12 Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, op. cit., p. 48.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Whereas struggles for recognition mediate between problematic categorisations and categorisations-in-view, categorisations seem to mediate unproblematic recognition. On the one hand, that is, Allardt's study points towards understanding recognition to be categorisation-based in the sense that categorisations mediate recognitive relations by giving recognisers and recognisees reasons for mutual treatments. As soon as such treatments become problematic, on the other hand, struggles for recognition mediate between problematic and unproblematic categorisations. Thus, ethnic recognition and ethnic categorisation seem to have an instrumental relation.

1.7 *Multidimensional Recognition*

As to the question what is being recognised, it seems thus to make a difference whether one is recognised according to an unproblematic categorisation (a) or struggling for recognition because of problematic categorisations (b).

(a) In the first case, Allardt's study seems open to X being most anything. He does not claim to have any privileged answer to as what ethnic groups ought to be recognised. His study even appears to imply that there is not much reason to specify any solutions to ethnic conflicts or to project any thick standards of what ethnic groups ought to be prior to concrete and unique struggles. Rather, one should understand struggles for recognition to be processes, in which such resolutions are brought by through what I have named categorisations-in-view. Yet he seems to distinguish between two dimensions, along which X can be specified. One can start tracing an Allardtian taxonomy of recognition by observing that he distinguishes between two kinds of problems of recognition, two kinds of struggles for recognition and two kinds of politics of recognition corresponding.

First of all, there can be two different kinds of problems of ethnic recognition: In the first case we have a dominating group imposing categorisations on an inferior group that cannot accept them; in the second case we have a dominated group categorising itself and a superior group rejecting that categorisation. Correspondingly, there are, firstly, struggles, in which a dominated group fights against the stigmatisation or exclusion that is effected by the imposed categorisation of the dominating group, and then, secondly, there are struggles, in which a dominated group fights against an assimilation that is effected by the hegemonic group's rejection of its self-categorisations. In both cases, different policies are needed; with reference to the Allardtian vocabulary, one might call them, respectively, a politics of inclusion and a politics of 'special consideration'.¹⁴

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 48.

For the taxonomy of recognition, this appears to imply a distinction between a deontic dimension and an axiological dimension of ethnicity: Allardt's study thus can be seen as proposing a two-dimensional conception of 'unproblematic recognition', according to which an ethnic group can be recognised, on the one hand, in relation to its universality and, on the other, in relation to its particularity or singularity.¹⁵ Being recognised in relation to its universality would then mean for an ethnic group to be treated according to a categorisation of it as persons bearing equal rights with everyone else. The meaning of being recognised in relation to particularity or singularity is left more open in Allardt's study. Phrases such as being recognised "as distinct groups worthy of special consideration" seems to imply singling out minority groups and thus emphasise the dimension of singularity.¹⁶ However, Allardt also understands the second kind of recognition as satisfying needs of 'belonging' and esteem, which in turn appears to put weight on a solidarity of particularities.

This multidimensional account of unproblematic recognition implied in Allardt's study clearly anticipates Honneth's multidimensional accounts. In Honneth too, a person can be recognised in his or her universality, particularity and singularity. In his early works, Honneth identifies these modes of recognition, respectively, as respect, esteem, and love.¹⁷ In his later works, he lays emphasis on the corresponding institutional complexes of 'social freedom': market, public sphere, and personal relationships (such as friendship, intimate relationship, and family).¹⁸ I will put aside the question of how far one might go in elaborating these resemblances. The crucial point here is that, to both Allardt and Honneth, ethnicity cannot be neatly placed in one specific recognitive box.¹⁹ On the contrary, it may turn out as relevant for any dimension of recognition. Thus, Allardt can be seen as agreeing with Honneth that, whereas recognition is to be understood multidimensional, there is no reason to single out 'ethnic' or 'cultural' recognition as one of these dimensions.

15 Similarly, Heikki Ikäheimo has distinguished between 'deontic' and 'axiological' dimensions with respect to personhood. See: Heikki Ikäheimo, "Recognizing Persons", in Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (eds.), *Dimensions of Personhood*, Exeter: Academic Imprint, pp. 224–247, 2007.

16 Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44, 48.

17 Cf.: Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995/1992.

18 Cf.: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*

19 Honneth rejects the idea of a specific sphere of 'cultural recognition' in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 161–170.

(b) As to the question of what is being recognised in struggling for recognition, it is important to note that Allardt's study gives no reason to distinguish between the formal grammars of struggles against discrimination and struggles for special consideration: basically, all struggles for recognition follow one and the same general pattern. Nonetheless, a further conceptual complexity appears to be at hand at this point too: Allardt namely proposes formally a two-dimensional conception of the struggle for recognition. In the formal structure of 'A recognises B as X', X is constituted by two different species of categorisers—namely, self-categorisers and external categorisers. The two-way complex is, thus, in struggling for recognition, expanded to a kind of 'highway complex': A does not merely recognise B as a X and B recognise A as a relevant recogniser of X's—because of the two different species of X's, ethnic recognition demands two more tracks. These two species of Allardtian ethnic recognisees demand a higher complexity than has been presented up to this point, because contrary to other multidimensional conceptions of recognition—as for instance proposed by Honneth as being loved, respected, and esteemed—in Allardtian struggles for recognition, firstly, wanting to be considered 'specially' or to have equal status does not have transformative consequences for the formal grammar of the struggle for recognition and, secondly, his two species of strugglers—that is, self-categorisers and external categorisers—always appear in the same relation. Struggles for recognition are constituted by the following complex of attitudes, in which A stands for a dominant group (categorising externally) and B for a (self-categorising) dominated group: A recognises B as a relevant self-categoriser, whereas B recognises A as a relevant categoriser of self-categorisers; this, however, commits B to recognise A as a relevant external categoriser, whereas A recognises B as a relevant categoriser of external categorisers.

Notice that to Allardt, there is an internal asymmetry to this formal grammar of ethnic conflicts: The dominating group does not stand in need of recognition of itself as an authoritative self-categoriser, nor does the minority have any intention of recognising it as such. The dominated group, by contrast, is being recognised externally in its being recognised as a relevant (external) categoriser of external categorisers.

However, important at this point of argument is that recognition in the course of a struggle is, according to this dialogical and processual categorisation-based account, something different than recognition according to unproblematic categorisations: Recognising someone in the latter case would be treating (a group of) persons in accordance with them being of the category X, implying either equal status or special consideration; recognising someone in the former case would in turn be treating (a group of) persons in accordance

with them being relevant self- or external categorisers in a common quest for new categorisations to apply in the latter case. This is a point that Allardt does not mention himself. Neither is it clear to me how Honneth understands the relation of recognitive relations in the course of struggles to unproblematic recognitive relations.

1.8 *Hermeneutical Recognition*

In categorising *ethnic* groups there are, according to Allardt, four different criteria, to which to take recourse: (1) self-categorisation, (2) descent, (3) distinctive cultural patterns such as language and (4) formal organisation of ethnic interaction.²⁰ That is, in categorising ethnically one may point, firstly, to the group's ethnically categorising itself such and such, secondly, to its members' having such and such descent, thirdly, to its members sharing such and such cultural characteristics and, finally, to its having some kind of formal organisation(s) for inner- and inter-ethnic interaction. These criteria constitute the "core elements"²¹ of every ethnicity: They need not to apply to every member of a certain ethnic group, but in every ethnic group there has to be some members that can be said to share some kind of descent, some cultural characteristics, some formal organisation and self-categorisations.

These four types of criteria could be further divided into two super-types: (1) and (4), namely, refer to ethnicity as a social or subjective achievement (and to the medium of its expression) and might thus be labelled subjective criteria. One consequence of the application of such criteria is that ethnic groups are, essentially, self-conscious groups, since ethnic groups categorising themselves as such are conscious of themselves as being groups. By the achievement of the status of self-conscious groups with formal organisations, ethnic groups also come up to the criterion of being potential recognisers. (2) and (3), in turn, refer to ethnicity as capacity; such capacities can involve mastering a certain language, sharing certain habits or origins etc., and reference to them in practices of categorisation thus constitute capacity criteria. Allardt argues that not only subjective but also capacity criteria must be understood as socially constituted grounds for categorisation and they can all be contested in ethnic struggles for recognition.²²

Moreover, there can be identified an asymmetry between these super-types. Hegemonic ethnic groups as paradigmatic external categorisers are often

20 Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–33.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

22 *Ibid.*

bound to ground their categorisation in ethnic conflicts on capacity criteria, whereas dominated groups as paradigmatic self-categorisers can base their categorisation solely on subjective criteria.

There is a certain asymmetry between categorisations of others and self-categorisations. Categorisations by others are always based on some specific criterion or criteria, be it then physical or cultural characteristics, which are attributed to those categorised. Self-categorisations may occur without references to specific external criteria. The crucial element is an expressed will to belong to a certain group.²³

Whereas self-categorisation is self-referential in the sense that it refers only to its own expression (and to the formal organisation by means of which it is expressed), external categorisation, in a conflict, in which there is disagreement about self-categorisations, is dependent upon external grounds such as descent and cultural patterns.

The conceptions of subjective criteria and capacity criteria, furthermore, seem to be compatible with the idea of struggles for recognition as responsive to and generative of categorisations. In fact, these general criteria appear to say something significant about ethnic conflicts in precisely this regard: Conceiving struggles for recognition as conflicts, in which there is dispute about criteria and practical implications of categorisation, appears to bring one close to the inference that struggles for recognition ought to be understood as interpretive processes of integrating criteria and praxis in categorisations.²⁴ Allardt's study thus gives reason to comprehend recognition as hermeneutical. In such struggles the issue is not directly about recognition or misrecognition of identity as something given prior to the cognitive process itself. Following this hermeneutical account, the struggle for recognition could therefore be understood as an interpretive process, in which the categorisations of ethnicity brought about in external and self-categorisations constitute better or worse interpretations of identity.

1.9 *Pragmatic Recognition*

Understanding these categorisations as interpretations of ethnic identity brings us closer to determining the kind of relations that Allardt's study suggests between problematic categorisations, categorisations-in-view, and struggles for recognition. Besides struggles for recognition being interpretive

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

processes of bringing forth new categorisations, Allardt's inquiry gives reasons to understand them as resolving ethnic conflicts through such interpretations and categorisations.

My suggestion is to clarify this issue by conceiving of such a process as a sequence involving three phases: Firstly, a phase of problematic, broken down categorisations; secondly a phase of contention of categorisations; and finally, a phase of establishing new, 'unproblematic' categorisations.²⁵ If and when the new categorisations become problematic, the sequence is repeated. Neither equal rights nor special consideration can be established without recognition. For that reason there is a motivational force guiding the groups beyond the phases of indeterminacy and contention toward reconciliation.

The struggle for recognition is then responsive to categorisations in the sense that it is a response to an indeterminate situation, in which the categorisations directing interethnic interaction have become problematic; the struggle for recognition is, correspondingly, generative of categorisations in the sense that, in order to establish a determinate situation, new categorisations need to be created to direct inter-ethnic interaction. One could thus say that in the Allardtian conception of struggles for recognition response is generation; the difference is not so much ontological as it is methodological—it depends only upon one's decision to look at the conflicts in relation either to problematic categorisations or to categorisations-in-view.

Finally, as a totality, the struggle for recognition is thus to be understood as a process of problem resolution: Its beginning poses an ethnic problem, to which is responded by the development of new categorisations, which in turn ought to establish an ethnically integrated situation. As such, the account of recognition that Allardt's study points towards conceiving the ethnic conflict as an inquiry into identity.

2 Allardt's Politics of Recognition

2.1 *From Imposing to Rejecting Categorisations*

As we have seen, Allardt regards ethnic misrecognition as the mismatch between self- and external categorisations and recognition as the process, in

25 John Dewey has suggested a similar 'general pattern of social conflicts'. See: John Dewey, *Ethics*, in *The Later Works 1925–1953* (Vol. 7), Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985, pp. 314 ff. See also: John Dewey, *Lectures in China 1919–1920*, Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1973, pp. 76 ff.; John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture*, in *The Later Works 1925–1953* (Vol. 13), Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.

which such categorisations are brought to reconciliation. On the basis of this conception of ethnic recognition, Allardt now works out a typology of ethnic conflicts. Following what has been said about recognition so far, two kinds of ethnic conflicts can be distinguished: namely, conflicts, in which a dominant group imposes external categorisations on an inferior group, on the one hand, and conflicts, in which the self-categorisations of an inferior group are rejected by the dominant group, on the other.²⁶

In the first case, we have a dominating (paradigmatically majority) group imposing on an inferior (paradigmatically minority) group a categorisation that this group cannot endorse. An extreme example for Allardt here is Nazi policy toward Jews, but also hegemonic North American cultural schemes in their relation to African Americans are presented as a paradigmatic case. This kind of ethnic domination typically is played out as stigmatisation and material exclusion of the inferiors to the advantage of safeguarding the material privileges of a hegemonic group. It is as a rule based on a strong hierarchical ethnic division of labour.

In the second case, we have a dominating (paradigmatically majority) group rejecting the self-categorisation of a dominated (paradigmatically minority) group. Here the superiors do not dominate the inferiors by imposing external categorisations, but by refusing to take the self-categorisation into account. Domination takes the form not of material exclusion, but of coerced cultural assimilation. Paradigmatic cases for Allardt here include the Basque-Castilian conflict in Spain and Friulian activism in Northern Italy. This kind of ethnic domination typically is played out as monopolisation of 'neutral' standards of public life. Such domination is possible, even expected, in societies with weaker ethnic division of labour.

2.2 *From a Politics of Inclusion to a Politics of Special Consideration*

In a next step, Allardt turns this distinction into what he calls "a historical pattern of majority-minority relations".²⁷ In a vein that bears some resemblance with Charles Taylor's later distinction between a "politics of universalism" and a "politics of difference," there is a distinction in Allardt's inquiry between what I in section 1.6 called a politics of inclusion and a politics of special consideration.²⁸ These two political schemes are to be understood as

26 Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, op. cit., pp. 43–52.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

28 Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition': An Essay*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 37–44.

responses to the two problems of recognition, and, thus, be both conceived of as politics of recognition—a politics of equal recognition and a politics of particular or singular recognition.

Whereas ethnic conflicts in Europe until the end of the Second World War were in general based on hegemonic nationalist imposition of external categorisations on minority groups, the ethnic conflicts of Allardt's coeval post-1968 era typically are characterised by demands for special consideration, by which anti-hegemonic nationalist minority groups claim acknowledgement of their self-categorisations. Allardt takes the problems of discrimination to be based on a more 'primitive' kind of majority-minority relation, where the criteria of ethnicity are the categorisations performed by the majority. The politics of special consideration, by contrast, appears in a more 'refined' majority-minority relation, in which the categorisations and criteria of ethnicity themselves have become a subject-matter of conflict.²⁹ Allardt is convinced that the principal problems of a politics of inclusion (material exclusion, strong ethnic division of labour, stigmatisation etc.) should be solved, in order for the problems of a politics of special consideration to appear at the scene in the first place.³⁰

Allardt's politics of recognition is profoundly pragmatic, because it is constitutively problem oriented. Due recognition is determined in relation to the recognitive problem it ought to resolve. Allardt's politics of recognition is also practical as opposed to symbolic: Recognition is not to be understood as a symbolic act that could be distinguished from the material treatment of a person or a group; Allardt does not distinguish between illegitimate material privileges of a dominant ethnic group on the one hand and its misrecognition of a dominated ethnic group on the other.³¹ Both seem to be part of one and the same recognitive relation between the groups. In this sense, Allardt suggests a Honnethian, rather than Fraserian conception.³² In order to formally determine due political recognition, his study combines in his conception of recognition modes of categorisation with modes of cultural division of labour.³³ Firstly, there are, according to Allardt, three different modes of ethnic categorisation: Categorisations performed (1) mainly by the dominant group,

29 Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–44.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

31 Arto Laitinen distinguishes between a 'symbolic' and 'practical' conception of recognition. See: Arto Laitinen, "Interpersonal Recognition", *op. cit.*, p. 465.

32 Cf.: Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition*, *op. cit.*

33 Erik Allardt, *Implications of the Ethnic Revival in Modern, Industrialized Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–51.

(2) by both groups, and (3) mainly by the dominated group. These are anchored, secondly, in three modes of cultural division of labour: (a) Hierarchical cultural division of labour, (b) territorial distinctiveness, or a segmented division of labour, and (c) no clear division of labour.

	1) Mainly external categorisations	2) Matching self- and external categorisations	3) Mainly self- categorisations
a) Hierarchical cultural division of labour	Problems of discrimination		(Unlikely combination)
b) Occupational segmentation		Due recognition	
c) No cultural division of labour	(Unlikely combination)		Problems of assimilation

Whereas both conflicts have the same formal grammar of a struggle for recognition, as was made explicit in 1.6 b), they differ in terms of semantics. The point that Allardt is making is that there are two different semantics of recognitive conflicts, that these are typical of two different phases in the history of majority-minority relations, and finally that they demand distinct policies.

2.3 *From Primordial to Subjective Conceptions of Ethnicity*

Allardt further argues that this historical development of a transition from a politics of inclusion to a politics of special consideration comes with a transformation of the nature ethnicity itself. On the basis of the recognitive conflict constituting the politics of recognition also the socially shared conception of what ethnicity is changes. In the transition from conflicts of imposing external categorisations with their politics of inclusion to conflicts of rejecting self-categorisations with their politics of special consideration, primordial capacity criteria in the socially effective conception of ethnicity give way for subjective criteria. Whereas in societies, in which the conflicts of imposing external categorisations and the politics of inclusion constitute ethnic policy, distinctive cultural patterns and common ancestry are seen as criteria of ethnicity, the subjective conception of ethnicity, by contrast, is self-consciously recognition- and self-categorisation-based. The only constitutive criteria for ethnicity in

the post-1968 era, the only criteria that really count at the end of the day are, according to Allardt, collective self-categorisation and the existence of some formal social organisation, by means of which the group might seek external recognition.

Conception of ethnicity	Primordial		Subjective	
Criteria of ethnicity	Distinctive cultural patterns	Common descent or ancestry	Self-categorisation and identification	Social organisation
Dominating categorisation	Coercive external categorisation		Collective self-categorisation	

This development is, to Allardt, to be understood as progress and emancipation since the new subjective conception of ethnicity allows many more options for cultural action than the earlier one. The self-categorisation-based ethnicity is “functional in modern society as it provides a (more flexible) social bond where old ascriptive structures have eroded. Ethnicity is less devise than integrative in many respects”.³⁴ It also pacifies ethnic conflict since it “clearly lessens the importance of ascriptive demands and increases the options open to individuals”.³⁵ It should also be understood as democratic progress. Allardt observes that the “ethnic revival,” which he identifies with struggles for special consideration, comes with growing mutual willingness from struggling parties to orient towards conceptions of the general or common good.³⁶

Thus, Allardt justifies his conception of ethnicity recognition-theoretically and developmentally: Struggles for recognition between dominating and dominated ethnic groups have brought about a conception of ethnicity that is more reflexive and aware of its own social foundations than the earlier one, which originated in the coercive external categorisation practices of a politics of discrimination. The subjective conception of ethnicity has a kind of developmental validity, since not endorsing it would mean returning to some kind of a primordial conception of forcing external standards on dominated

34 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Cf.: *Ibid.*, p. 25.

groups and therefore falling behind the struggles and learning processes separating the post-1968 generations from pre-WW II Europe.

3 Concluding Remarks

I would like to conclude this article by briefly summing up the relation of the thus reconstructed Allardtian approach to the Honnethian type of recognition (a) and noting two advantages of the approach presented above. The first hints at the diagnostic power of an Allardtian vocabulary for the current situation of ethnic conflicts in the Nordic countries (b). The second suggests a conceptual advantage of an Allardtian approach in light of the fallacies of an identity politics understanding of recognition (c).

(a) One can start figuring out the relation of Allardt to Honneth by classifying each of these above highlighted nine aspects of Allardt's recognition-talk as clearly compatible, clearly incompatible, or possibly compatible (under certain conditions) with Honnethian-type recognition theory. It seems to me that both Honneth and Allardt propose clearly dialogical (1.1), strict (1.4), multidimensional (1.7), and hermeneutic (1.8) accounts that furthermore treat recognition as both responsive to and generative of evaluative entities (1.5). Concerning the multidimensionality (1.7) of these accounts, however, it might be in order to note that Allardt and Honneth seem to treat what I have called problematic and unproblematic recognition differently. Honneth seems to link recognitive conflicts tighter to specified dimensions of unproblematic recognition than Allardt, to whom it looks not to make a decisive difference for the 'pattern' or 'grammar' of a struggle for recognition if it is fought for the recognition of the group's universality, singularity, or particularity. On the contrary, to Allardt what it is to be recognised in struggling for recognition is a separate issue and he presupposes a certain internal asymmetry of such recognition as specified under 1.7 above.

Only the categorisation-based vocabulary of Allardt's presents a point of clear incompatibility between the two accounts. From the perspective of Honneth's value-based approach, it looks at the same time helplessly abstract and epistemologically one-sided. With respect to the processuality (1.2), instrumentality (1.6), and pragmatality (1.9) one might determine the relation as possibly compatible since the implications are unclear. Treating struggles for recognition pragmatically (as a problem solving process) and recognition as instrumental to problem resolutions presupposes a processual (1.2) interest in the sequential structure of recognition, of which Honneth does not take much account but which is implicit in Allardt's observations and has been tried to be made explicit in this chapter.

(b) It seems to me that one might be able to tell a story about the Nordic countries, in which, after a fairly stable period of problems of assimilation and failed attempts at applying a politics of 'special consideration', we are witnessing the return of an aggressive categorisation-imposing hegemonic nationalism. Allardt's approach, thus reconstructed, delivers tools to situate the rise of the allegedly new kind of racism of 'True Finns', 'Sweden Democrats', and their even more powerful Norwegian and Danish equivalents as the hegemonic nationalist party of an oscillation between two forms of ethnic domination today. It calls for a recognition-theoretical investigation not only of the apparent racism of hegemonic nationalism but also of all too abstract attempts by the liberal counterparts at solving problems of assimilation; thus, it does not halt at a mere criticism of the apparent ethnic domination in the hegemonic nationalist policies, but more importantly, it challenges the liberal multiculturalism of the Nordic political mainstream to a thorough going self-criticism on the basis of its failures at coping with problems of assimilation.³⁷

(c) Following the lead of the hermeneutical and processual account of recognition, one can observe that Allardt's study foresees the criticism directed against some multiculturalist theories of recognition accusing them of reifying identities.³⁸ Allardt does not have to suppose that due recognition is dependent upon some external or antecedent standard of authentic identity that *ought to be* recognised. On the contrary, this inquiry seems to verify a pragmatic, hermeneutic, and processual account that determines due recognition in relation to concrete recognitive problems. He treats ethnic identities as changing and developing in the course of the mutual interpretive processes grasped in recognitive terms. In fact, this approach does not even presuppose that identity as something particular or singular must be the real issue at all—quite the opposite, there are struggles for recognition, in which the intention of the dominated group is liberation from recognition of its particular or singular identity; the transition from problems of discrimination to problems of assimilation is, put very crudely, a shift from too much recognition to too little recognition—as it is experienced by the dominated.

This points, moreover, to the fact that the framework of Allardt's study is internally opposed to such reification of identities and conceives it as the mode of misrecognition, by which groups are subjected to (external) categorisations that they cannot endorse. This form of reification of identities is in his inquiry already internally conceived as a form of misrecognition that is to be overcome

37 I have elaborated this diagnosis further in Arvi Särkelä, "Sannfinländarna: Medelmåttornas elit," in *Ny Tid*, 2011.

38 Cf. for example: Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

by open and fallible conceptions, categorisations and interpretations brought about in the dialogically, processually, and hermeneutically comprehended complex sequence of recognition. Nevertheless, this conception of recognition remains open to the normative relevance of particular or singular identities. That is, authenticity is something that may be rendered relevant in the process of recognition, as might be the case in some politics of special consideration. It conceives of all such criteria as immanent to the process of a struggle for recognition itself, within which the relevance of identities, classification, and categorisation will be determined. For the social theorist it remains to inquire into this process to determine the relations of domination in them and envision the possible resolutions and outcomes. That study as well as the struggle forming its subject matter might both turn out to be successful inquiries into identity.

Ultimate Values and Immanent Critique

*On Axel Honneth's Das Recht der Freiheit and Gunnar Myrdal's
An American Dilemma*

Carl-Göran Heidegren

In his major work, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, Axel Honneth argues that a theory of justice ought to take its point of departure in the ultimate values of a society, as realised in its existing institutions and practices.¹ This approach must, at the same time, allow for an immanent critique of these institutions and practices as possibly not fully realising the relevant values. In my view Honneth's position is, to a certain extent, anticipated in the writings of Gunnar Myrdal, Swedish social scientist and Social Democrat, most notably in his famous book *An American Dilemma* from 1944. However, for Myrdal the context was not the development of a theory of justice, but rather the problem of the relation between science and politics, between facts and values.

Myrdal is generally considered to be one of the key figures behind the development of the Swedish welfare state. He believed in a prophylactic social policy that paved the way for a new well-ordered and well-functioning society, and ultimately for a new type of human being. In a Swedish research context Myrdal has sometimes been portrayed as a ruthless social engineer who, on the basis of his scientific expertise, believes he knows better than ordinary people what is best for them and how they should live their lives.² In this article I try to present a different picture of Myrdal by way of discussing *An American Dilemma* in relation to the approach found in Honneth's above-mentioned book as well as some strands within contemporary critical theory.

¹ See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011.

² Cf. for example: Yvonne Hirdman, "‘Social Planning under Rational Control.’ Social Engineering in Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s", in Pauli Kettunen and Hanna Eskola (eds.), *Models, Modernity and the Myrdals*, Helsinki: The Renvall Institute for Area and Cultural Studies, 1997, pp. 55–80. It has been argued that the three pillars in the idea of the Swedish model were *progress*, *mutual understanding* (instead of class conflict), and *centralism* (the benevolent state). Ola Sigurdson claims that: "Social engineering intended to be a rational way of using and distributing resources in order to maximize progress". See: Ola Sigurdson, *Den lyckliga filosofin Etik och politik hos Hägerström, Tingsten, makarna Myrdal och Hedenius*, Stockholm/Stehag: BÖB Symposium, 2000, p. 197.

Firstly, I will elaborate on Honneth's position (section 1) and thereafter take a closer look at Myrdal's anticipation of it (section 2). In the following section I will then relate Myrdal's approach to an attempt by Robin Celikates to develop a model for a critical theory of society (section 3). The final section returns to the comparison between Myrdal and Honneth, now on the issue of immanent critique (section 4).

1 Theory of Justice as Analysis of Society

The overall goal of Axel Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit* is to develop a theory of justice in the form of an analysis of society. The primary theoretical inspiration for this undertaking is Hegel's philosophy of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) as outlined in his *Philosophy of Right* (1821). The American sociologist Talcott Parsons stands out, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, as a second major theoretical inspiration. This becomes clear if we take a look at the four methodological premises that Honneth delineates in the introductory chapter of his book.³ If we then add some material from subsequent parts of the book we can aptly summarise his approach.

1. The first premise states that the reproduction of societies presupposes the existence of *values and ideals* that are held in common and that provide an orientation which is shared among the members of society. This is what Parsons characterises in terms of the ultimate values of a society; they constitute the top level in what he calls the hierarchy of control. The normative societal order is legitimised through ethical values and ideals that are considered worth striving for. No form of life is, as such, conceived of as good or bad, but is good or bad only in the light of certain values and ideals. Every society, including any highly complex modern society, is normatively integrated.

According to Honneth, of all the ethical values, the one which has primacy and which has marked the self-understanding and institutional order of modern Western societies is that of *freedom* in the sense of *individual autonomy*.⁴ Our notion of social justice is bound up with the idea of freedom as individual self-determination. This is the ultimate value that is considered worth striving for. The value of equality is, according to Honneth, a derivation from that of freedom, in the sense that the former spells out that each member of society should have equal opportunity for individual self-determination. Thus, the

3 Cf.: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–31. Besides Hegel and Parsons, Émile Durkheim should be mentioned as a third major theoretical inspiration for Honneth.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 35 ff.

value of equality is implied in the value of autonomy. A societal order is seen as just only insofar as it allows for individual self-determination; if this is not so, it is seen as unjust. Thus, individual freedom is the yardstick for a legitimate, in the sense of just, social order.

2. The second premise states that only the ethical values and ideals that are necessary for the reproduction of a given society can be taken as moral points of reference for a theory of justice. Of crucial importance is that these values and ideals are realised or embodied in existing *societal institutions and practices*. The institutions and practices that realise the ultimate values held in common by the members of society are, in each case, those which are 'just'.

Bei-sich-selbst-Sein im Anderen is the Hegelian formula for freedom as realised or embodied in societal institutions and practices. For Honneth this translates into a notion of *social freedom* that implies a relation of mutual recognition, in the sense of an awareness that the realisation of my freedom is bound up with, and dependent upon, the realisation of the freedom of the other, and vice versa.⁵ Not each one for himself, but together we are free. The experience of others, not as obstacles to my freedom, but rather as making it possible and facilitating its development, is part of the foundation of social freedom.

At the centre of attention we find what Parsons calls 'relational institutions' and Honneth 'institutions of mutual recognition'.⁶ These are the institutions in which social freedom is realised, and in which the realisation of my wishes and goals is tied to the realisation of the wishes and goals of an *alter*. The relation between *ego* and *alter* is one of complementarity (*Ergänzung*), and of mutual recognition; the other does not intrude on my sphere of freedom, but is an active and necessary part in the realisation of my freedom. What we have here can be called an unconstrained reciprocity.

The social freedom in relational institutions primarily takes the form of *reciprocal role-obligations*, as normative specifications in different social

5 To interpret the value of freedom as *social freedom* is only one of several possibilities. Honneth also discusses what he calls *negative freedom* and *reflexive freedom*. In the first case freedom is interpreted as a right to idiosyncratic action as long as it does not intrude on the freedom of others, in the latter case as the demand on the acting subject to be autonomous or authentic in its acts (cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 44–57, 58–80).

6 Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, New York: The Free Press, 1964/1951, pp. 51 f.; Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 123. The reciprocal conferring of a normative status is what characterizes all relations of mutual recognition (cf.: *ibid.*, p. 224). On the concept of recognition see: Axel Honneth, "Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions", in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 46, No. 4, 2002, pp. 505–512.

spheres or systems of action of the ultimate value of autonomy.⁷ These role-obligations are brought to us through processes of socialisation from early childhood and onwards, and they are present within us as motives of action and behavioural expectations. Furthermore, these role-obligations, which can be said to be built into the relational institutions, are valid on the condition of their *reflexive acceptability* on behalf of the individuals.⁸ In this case the obligations attached to a certain social role—for example that of being a father—are not restrictions coming from the outside, but are in accordance with the subject's own wishes and goals—the wish and goal to be a good father.

3. The third premise states that the relevant institutions and practices are presented by way of a *normative reconstruction* of different societal spheres of justice. "Each constitutive sphere in our society embodies institutionally (...) a particular aspect of our experience of individual freedom."⁹ To be 'just' means something different in each of these action-systems. The three most important systems of action that Honneth distinguishes are intimate personal relations, market economic action, and democratic will formation in the political public sphere. Associated with these societal spheres we have corresponding role-obligations such as being a family member or a close friend, being gainfully employed and being a consumer, and being an engaged citizen taking part in common concerns. The major part of Honneth's book is devoted to the normative reconstruction of these action-systems, in which a social freedom is realised.¹⁰

4. The fourth premise, finally, states that the procedure of normative reconstruction must allow for a *critical application*. This involves the possibility of drawing attention to unrealised potentialities in existing institutions and practices, i.e. pointing out ways in which these, in a more comprehensive or better way, would embody the ultimate values and ideals. This is necessary in order to avoid taking the position of a simple affirmation of existing institutions and practices. In his exchange with Nancy Fraser some years ago Honneth insisted on the existence of a 'surplus of validity' (*Geltungsüberhang*) that allows for

7 Cf.: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., pp. 225ff.

8 On the notion of a social role as being reflectively acceptable, see: Michael O. Hardimon, "Role Obligations", in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 91, No. 7, 1994, pp. 348 ff.

9 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., pp. 9–10. Whereas 'construction' embraces the sketch of an ideal, 'reconstruction' means the depiction of already existing social conditions (cf.: *ibid.*, p. 11).

10 In addition to the above-mentioned, Honneth also discusses the social spheres of 'legal' and 'moral freedom' (cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 129–172, 173–218). The latter two refer to institutional complexes in which negative and reflexive freedom is embodied. As such they presuppose social freedom and the institutions and practices in which it is realized.

a critical stance in relation to a given institutionalised recognition order.¹¹ By assuming such a potential surplus he drew attention to the possibility of critique and the further development of a certain institution. This perspective opens up for a morally founded critique and for morally motivated action. Existing institutions and practices are criticised in light of the values and ideals that the members of society have in common, and which are not realised in an entirely satisfactory way in these institutions and practices. This kind of critique aims, so to speak, at giving reality a push in the direction of a fuller or better realisation of the ethical values that to some extent are already realised.

Social criticism comes in two forms: as critique of social pathologies and as critique of social misdevelopments.¹² Honneth describes a *social pathology* as being a societal development that results in some or all members of society no longer being capable of participating in social cooperation because they do not rationally understand the relevant practices and norms. Honneth, borrowing an expression from Christopher F. Zurn, talks here of “second-order disorders”.¹³ A certain first-order institutionalised practice has become estranged from the members of society; they can no longer relate to it and partake in it in an adequate way. Instead, they systematically misunderstand the practice in question in a way that undermines their capacity to take part in the relevant forms of social cooperation and mutual recognition. As symptoms of a social pathology Honneth mentions the development of rigid social behaviour and rigid relations to the self, accompanied by moods of depression and lack of orientation. Rather than being expressed in the publications of scholarly research, social pathologies are often indirectly articulated in cultural products such as novels, films, and works of art.¹⁴

11 Cf.: Axel Honneth, “Redistribution as Recognition: A Reply to Nancy Fraser”, in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Philosophical-Political Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003, pp. 174 f., 186 f.

12 Cf.: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., pp. 157 f., 230 f. Whereas social misdevelopments pertain to the action-systems of social freedom, social pathologies pertain to the spheres of legal and moral freedom.

13 Cf.: Christopher F. Zurn, “Social Pathologies as Second-Order Disorders”, in Danielle Petherbridge (ed.), *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays—With a Reply by Axel Honneth*, London and Boston: Brill, 2011, pp. 345–370.

14 Social pathologies of *legal* freedom are, firstly, the tendency to interpret one’s own freedom solely in terms of entitlements and claimable rights, and secondly, the tendency to avoid, for as long as possible, taking upon oneself intersubjective obligations, i.e. to turn indecision and drifting into a style of life (cf.: Axel Honneth, *ibid.*, pp. 157–172). A social pathology of *moral* freedom is the tendency to succumb to the illusion of an unsituated freedom, thereby disregarding the fact that we are always situated in a life world and have

A *social misdevelopment*, on the other hand, is characterised by Honneth in terms of a difference between the ideal typically bundled patterns of action tied to a certain social sphere and the individual deviations from these patterns. This difference represents a misdevelopment in the sense that the acting individuals fall short of the kind of social freedom that is already ideally (*an sich*) realised in the relevant social sphere. The misdevelopments have the shape of “anomalies whose sources are to be sought elsewhere than in the constitutive rules of the relevant action-system itself”.¹⁵ Social misdevelopments of this kind are especially to be found in the social spheres of market economic action and democratic will-formation.¹⁶

These are, in broad outline, the basic pillars of Honneth’s book as I interpret it. The point of departure for a contemporary theory of justice conceived of as an analysis of society should be the ultimate values and ideals of modern Western societies. These values and ideals are realised in existing institutions and practices in a more or less comprehensive way. With regards to the individual members of society this institutionalisation primarily takes the form of role-expectations and role-obligations relating to the basic systems of action or social spheres. However, far from being a simple affirmation of existing institutions and practices, Honneth’s approach allows for an immanent critique that directs attention to how these values and ideals can be realised in a better or more comprehensive way. This is a form of critique that does not try to establish a standpoint outside or beyond the society that is criticised, but rather takes its point of departure in that which is immanent in the society in question.¹⁷

specific role-obligations; in this case moral freedom is wrongly taken to be the whole of freedom. One version of this kind of social pathology is morally motivated terrorism (cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 206–218).

15 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

16 A misdevelopment in the sphere of consumption is the widespread mentality of private consumerism, focusing on individualistic and shortlived goods, instead of intersubjective co-ordination and discussion among consumers (cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 398–410). A similar misdevelopment in the sphere of work takes the form of an individualization of responsibility for success and failure in the labour market, instead of viewing this social sphere as a community of co-operation with a shared responsibility (cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 458–470).

17 On various forms of social critique see the instructive distinctions in Antti Kauppinen, “Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique”, in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2002, pp. 480–485.

2 The Role of Value Premises and Social Engineering

Gunnar Myrdal's voluminous study *An American Dilemma*, with the subtitle *The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, is one of the rather few international classics in social science produced by a Swedish author. Myrdal's point of departure in this book is in the ultimate values upon which, as he conceives it, American society is founded, and which are (partially) realised in its existing institutions and, not least, present in the heart of every American as ideals worth striving for and as obligations to live up to. This approach makes room for an immanent critique of existing institutions and practices, first and foremost the practice of discrimination (supported or not by state legislation), i.e., it allows for a critique that does not appeal to a standard that is external to what is being criticised, but to one that is anchored in the very values and ideals of American society. What is asked for in a critical gesture is a more comprehensive realisation of these fundamental American values.

In this section I will first, in a few words, describe how *An American Dilemma* came into being (2.1), and after that present some relevant information about the author and about his particular Swedish background (2.2). Then I will take a somewhat closer look at the line of argument found in Myrdal's book, and discuss how it relates to the approach that we found in Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit* (2.3).

2.1 The Assignment and Genesis of the Book

It was in the late summer of 1937 that Frederick P. Keppel, on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation in New York, invited Myrdal to become the director of (as it was formulated in the letter of invitation) "a comprehensive study of the Negro in the United States, to be undertaken in a wholly objective and dispassionate way as a social phenomenon".¹⁸ After an initial declination and some hesitation Myrdal finally accepted the invitation, although he had never before in any way dealt with 'the Negro problem' in his scientific work. The assignment, he recalled some twenty years later, "called upon me to become an expert—more so than any other European scholar of this generation—on almost everything that is wrong in America".¹⁹ A first meeting took place in New York in the spring of 1938, and in September the same year Myrdal, together with his

18 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, p. xlix. The Pantheon Books-edition is in two volumes but with a running pagination.

19 *Ibid.*, p. xxiii. The quote is from Author's Preface to the Twentieth Anniversary Edition from 1962.

wife and their three children, arrived in America to take up the work. Together with a Swedish colleague and an American guide he started his research with a two-month long journey through the Southern states. This proved to be an upsetting experience: "I was shocked and scared to the bones by all the evils I saw, and by the serious political implications of the problem which I could not fail to appreciate from the beginning."²⁰ The research project that he was to lead was, considering the times, very well-funded. Approximately 70 researchers were involved in the investigations initiated and conducted in the project. After the German occupation of Denmark and Norway in April 1940, Myrdal returned for some time to Sweden, following a risky journey by boat over the North Atlantic and arriving in Petsamo at the northern coast of Finland (today part of Russia). He went back to America in March 1941 after another adventurous journey that took him with the trans-Siberian railroad through the Soviet Union, with a boat to Japan and then a flight to San Francisco. After his wife, Alva, had arrived in America in October the same year a period of intense work began, which was mainly conducted in Princeton, New Jersey. Myrdal's only two co-operators at this stage were Richard Sterner, a Swedish statistician, and Arnold Rose, a young sociology graduate student from the University of Chicago, whose names also appear on the title page of the book. The manuscript was finished in August 1942. The preface to the first edition is dated "Stockholm, October, 1942". The book finally appeared in January 1944.²¹

2.2 *The Man and His Background*

When Myrdal accepted the invitation from the Carnegie Corporation he was 39 years old, a professor in political economy at Stockholm University, an active Social Democrat and a member of the Swedish Parliament. In short, he was a

20 *Ibid.*, p. xxv. Myrdal's acquaintance with the South was no doubt more profound than the kind of "car-window sociologist" that Du Bois had mocked: "the man who seeks to understand and know the South by devoting the few leisure hours of a holiday trip to unravelling the snarl of centuries". See: William E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, New York: Dover Publications, 1994/1903, p. 94. In the autumn of 1939, Myrdal made a long trip across the South together with one of his closest collaborators, the Afro-American political scientist Ralph Bunche (1904–1971). And at a later stage in the research process Myrdal spent four weeks in Jackson, Mississippi, a stay that gave him further first-hand acquaintance with the workings of the Jim Crow-system.

21 For a detailed account of the background for Myrdal's assignment, how the research was conducted, and the genesis of the book, see: Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism 1938–1987*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990, Ch. 2, 4, and 5.

man in the middle of a successful career. But it was *An American Dilemma* that turned him into an internationally well-known and renowned social scientist.

Gunnar Myrdal was born in 1898. He came from the mid-western Swedish countryside, from a family in social ascendancy, but without any academic tradition. Myrdal grew up mainly in Stockholm, where he began his university studies in 1918. After initially studying law he later turned to economics, and took his doctoral degree in 1927. In 1924 he had married Alva Reimer (1902–1986). Together the Myrdals spent the academic year 1929–1930 in the USA as holders of Rockefeller fellowships. They arrived there on 29 October, the day before the collapse of the stock market at Wall Street. During this first stay in America they established contacts with many scholars, among them renowned sociologists such as Robert S. Lynd, William F. Ogburn, Ernest W. Burgess, Pitirim Sorokin and William I. and Dorothy S. Thomas. The Thomases, in particular, were to become close friends and collaborators. Myrdal later wrote that during this first visit he did not travel south of Washington D.C., and never came into contact with the black population or any black scholar.²² The time in America was followed by a year in Geneva, Switzerland, before they returned to Sweden in 1931. In the year before Myrdal had published a major work entitled *Vetenskap och politik i nationalekonomin* (1930).²³ One of his most important conclusions in the book was that science cannot rid itself completely of all valuations and interests. In 1932 the Myrdals joined the Social Democratic Labour Party. Two years later, 1934, they jointly published what was to become their most controversial book, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* [Crisis in the Population Question]. This was a programmatic text for a modern welfare state, for a population policy adapted to an urbanised industrial society. The book discussed issues, controversial at the time, such as birth control, information on sexual matters, and eugenics. During the 1930s Myrdal was active both as a theorist in social science and in practical-political issues. Together with his wife he was the radical spokesman for a new social policy based on rational planning and social engineering.²⁴

22 Cf.: Gunnar Myrdal, *Historien om An American Dilemma* [The History of *An American Dilemma*], Uddevalla: SNS Förlag, 1987, pp. 36 ff.

23 The book was translated into German in 1932 and into English in 1953 under the title *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory* (a translation that was made from the German text).

24 Myrdal was to receive the Nobel Prize in economics, shared with Friedrich von Hayek, in 1974. In the same year as he died, 1987, he published *Historien om An American Dilemma*. On Myrdal in general, see: Sven Eliæson, "Gunnar Myrdal: A Theorist of Modernity", in *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2000, pp. 331–341. On his later career, see: Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience*, *op. cit.*, Ch. 8. On the contacts with America and

Myrdal was, from a rather early stage, influenced by the Swedish philosopher Axel Hägerström (1868–1939), professor of practical philosophy at Uppsala University from 1911 until 1933.²⁵ In the realm of practical philosophy Hägerström's most well-known contribution is the doctrine that was later given the name of *value nihilism*.²⁶ It says that value judgements are not, and cannot be, true or false; they are nothing but expressions of our preferences, of what we like and what we dislike. Hägerström formulated this doctrine already in his inaugural lecture from 1911, which was published under the title "*Om moraliska föreställningars sanning*" [On the Truth of Moral Ideas]. The lecture concludes with the famous words, at least in a Swedish context: "There can never be any teaching *in* morality, only *on* morals."²⁷ A moral theory can only be about the moral valuations actually held by some people at a certain time and place, but never about what is in itself morally good or bad.

Myrdal came to advocate the idea that the value premises guiding social research have to be purposively selected by the social scientist. True values do not exist, i.e., the truth of a certain value (or valuation) cannot be the criterion for selecting it. Thus the question becomes: How do we select our value premises if none is, and none can be, more true than another? In *An American Dilemma* Myrdal strongly rejects the idea that "ours is the prerogative of pronouncing on *a priori* grounds which values are 'right' and which are 'wrong'".²⁸ To do such a thing is far beyond both the mandate and the reach of the social scientist, in fact beyond the reach of human effort. The proper ambition,

American scholars, see beside Jackson also: Jan-Olof Nilsson, *Alva Myrdal: En virvel i den moderna strömmen*, Stockholm/Stehag: BÖB Symposium, 1994, pp. 138–144, 284–296.

25 A recent comprehensive study in English is: Patricia Mindus, *A Real Mind: The Life and Work of Axel Hägerström*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2009. On Myrdal and Hägerström, see: Staffan Källström, *Den gode nihilisten: Axel Hägerström och striderna kring uppsalafilosofin*, Stockholm: Raben & Sjögren, 1986, Ch. 4; Ola Sigurdson, *Den lyckliga filosofin, op. cit.*, Ch. 5; Johan Strang, *History, Transfer, Politics: Five Studies on the Legacy of Uppsala Philosophy*, Tampere: Philosophical Studies from the University of Helsinki 30, 2010, Study V. Cf. Also: Gunnar Myrdal, "Postscript", in Paul Steeten (ed.), *Value in Social Theory: A Selection of Essays on Methodology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, pp. 250 f. Another important influence on Myrdal should at least be mentioned: Max Weber. Cf.: Jan-Olof Nilsson, *Alva Myrdal, op. cit.*, pp. 145ff.

26 The term seems to have been coined in the early 1930s by opponents to Hägerström. Cf.: Johan Strang, *History, Transfer, Politics, op. cit.*, pp. 92f. Later, it was adopted by philosophers closer to him.

27 Axel Hägerström, *On the Truth of Moral Propositions*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964, p. 96.

28 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma, op. cit.*, p. lxxii.

Myrdal declares paraphrasing Hägerström without mentioning him by name, must be: "Our investigation will naturally be an analysis *of* morals and not *in* morals."²⁹

Further echoes of Hägerström in *An American Dilemma* can be found in Myrdal's critique of the very idea of natural law as being rooted in a "particular type of magical thinking", as opposed to "the modern idea of creating laws by legislation",³⁰ and his view of a social teleology as "implied" in the Marxian materialistic conception of history, due to which Marx, in sharp contrast to Myrdal, showed little interest in social planning and social engineering.³¹

2.3 *The Book and Its Argument*

Turning to Myrdal's book, the main line of argument can be summarised in the following way: *An American Dilemma* is about *the* American dilemma. This dilemma is essentially a moral dilemma, consisting in a moral tension or conflict. Furthermore, it is a white man's dilemma or problem. It is situated in the very heart of every white American. The dilemma is about the discrepancy between the most general values adhered to and lower-level valuations. It is about the discrepancy between the ideals of Americans, summarised in what is called the American Creed, and their actual behaviour. The dilemma relates to various forms of social misdevelopment in America. It is about a complex of problems that can find a solution, or at least a significant improvement, by way of rational planning and social engineering. In the following I will begin to elaborate on the line of argument just presented.

Against the backdrop of America's entrance into the on-going war, Myrdal writes in the last chapter of the book: "What America is constantly reaching for is democracy at home and abroad."³² However, to stand up in a convincing way for freedom and equal opportunity in the world is impossible as long as the situation at home for a significant part of the population is marked by segregation and discrimination. "The treatment of the Negro is America's greatest and most conspicuous scandal"³³ It is impossible to fight racism in Europe and elsewhere in the world, while at the same time practicing it at home. In this sense *An American Dilemma* is about *the* American dilemma. Furthermore, this dilemma becomes acute because Americans, according to Myrdal, are a moralistic people. They are just the opposite of cynics. Rather,

29 *Ibid.*, p. 1027.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

31 Cf. *ibid.*, 1051.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 1021.

33 *Ibid.*

the ordinary American takes questions about right and wrong very seriously. "It is a relatively important matter to him to be true to his own ideals and to carry them out in actual life. We recognize the American, wherever we meet him, as a practical idealist."³⁴ In this sense the dilemma is a *moral* dilemma.

The American Creed is the name given by Myrdal for the set of valuations that, according to him, Americans have in common, that are engraved in the heart of almost every American: America *is* the land of the free, *is* the land of equal opportunity, *is* the safeguard for human dignity, and *is* the home of democracy.³⁵ These valuations make up the very soul of America, and being an American involves an obligation to live up to and stand up for them. "We shall find that even a poor and uneducated white person in some isolated and backward rural region in the Deep South, who is violently prejudiced against the Negro and intent upon depriving him of civic rights and human independence, has also a whole compartment in his valuation sphere housing the entire American Creed of liberty, equality, justice, and fair opportunity for everybody."³⁶ The American Creed, as a set of shared valuations, is what lends the American nation its *cultural unity*.³⁷ However, these ideals are not only engraved in the heart of every American; they are also to a large extent realised in the institutional structures of the country. Myrdal mentions

34 *Ibid.*, p. lxviii.

35 This American Creed is also called a "system of social ideals" (*ibid.*, p. 209). In Myrdal's interpretation the creed has its intellectual roots in the philosophy of Enlightenment, in Christianity (especially various lower class Protestant sects), and in English law traditions (cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 8–12).

36 *Ibid.*, p. lxx. NB.: "To be sure, the moral dilemma thesis rested on Myrdal's own interviewing and impressions, rather than on a rigorous empirical testing of white racial attitudes". See: Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience*, *op. cit.*, p. 230. On this issue cf.: Robert K. Merton, "Discrimination and the American Creed", in *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays*, New York and London: The Free Press, 1976, pp. 189–216.

37 In Myrdal's interpretation the values of equality and liberty imply one another; liberty is not the right of the stronger to infringe on the weaker. Myrdal even considers a social equality as implied in the creed: "In this sense, equality is logically derivable from liberty, just as liberty is from equality: if there is real liberty for all there will be equal opportunity and equal justice for all, and there will even be social equality limited only by minor biological inequalities." (Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, p. 9) In other words, equality must prevail over rugged individualism: "When there is a substantial discrimination present, liberty for the white person has to be overruled by equality" (*ibid.*, p. 574). Myrdal, in the language of Honneth, diagnoses a tendency to a shift among Americans from an understanding of freedom as *negative* freedom ('rugged individualism') to *social* freedom ('the other fellow's liberty').

institutions such as the church, the school, the university, the foundation, the trade-union, associations in general and the state. "It is in these institutions that the American Creed has its instruments: it plays upon them as on mighty organs. In adhering to these ideals, the institutions show a pertinacity matched only by their great flexibility in local and temporary accommodation".³⁸ In their institutions the Americans have invested their ideas about what is right and what a just society is. In fact, through the institutions moral pressure is put on the praxis of discrimination. "Through these huge institutional structures, a constant pressure is brought to bear on race prejudice, counteracting the natural tendency for it to spread and become more intense".³⁹

A moral dilemma arises as soon as the American Creed, realised in the institutional structures and in the heart of Americans, is disregarded in practice, as soon as valuations at a lower level of generality motivate behaviour characterised by segregation, discrimination and humiliation towards the black citizens in America. According to Myrdal, this kind of behaviour springs from a variety of motives: personal and local interests, economic, social and sexual jealousy, conformity or group prejudices etc. "From the point of view of the American Creed the status accorded the Negro in America represents nothing more and nothing less than a century-long lag of public morals. In principle the Negro problem was settled long ago; in practice the solution is not effectuated".⁴⁰ The *colour line* is, especially in the South, a *caste line* that cannot be transgressed, and which condemns every black man to a life considered to be of less worth than the life of every white man, rich or poor, educated or uneducated. This is the working of the so called Jim Crow-system, crystallised in the ideology of "separate, but equal", which on the surface is spelled out as "segregation, but *no* discrimination", but in practice means "segregation *and* discrimination". This practice of discrimination and humiliation is supported by different forms of rationalisation and lower-level valuations that keeps the black man in his or her place and that tells the white man that it is right to do so.⁴¹ In fact the Jim Crow-system can be seen as nothing but a gigantic social misdevelopment in American society. The kind of freedom and equality that is to a large degree

38 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

41 The Jim Crow-system involved, among many other things, techniques for disfranchising the blacks and such humiliating practices as not allowing a black man to enter a white man's house through the front door.

realised in the institutional structures is massively counteracted by racist practices and (sometimes) a legislation supporting them.⁴²

It is Myrdal's optimistic conviction that in the long run this system of discrimination and humiliation cannot survive, simply because it is a moral dilemma situated in the very heart of almost every white American. Such a discrepancy between the most cherished general values and the lower-level valuations that guide actual everyday behaviour in many situations is, in the long run, not liveable. Perhaps it could have been, if Americans had been cynics who did not care very much about having a moral, but they are not. Rather, they are rationalists and moralists that are disrupted and plagued by inconsistencies in their household of valuations and behaviour. "The white man can humiliate the Negro; he can thwart his ambitions; he can starve him; he can press him down into vice and crime; he can occasionally beat him and even kill him; but he does not have the moral stamina to make the Negro's subjugation legal and approved by society. Against that stands not only the Constitution and the laws which could be changed, but also the American Creed which is firmly rooted in the Americans' hearts."⁴³ Thus the valuations that constitute the cultural unity of America allow for a critical application in relation to existing institutions, insofar as they do not fully realise the American Creed, and in relation to existing practices and actual behaviour, insofar as they are guided by the opposite valuations. Thus a change is possible; but it will not come about all by itself. First of all, a change must take hold in the mind of the whites; indeed such a change is, according to Myrdal, well under way through the decay of the caste theory which says that people are born in such and such a way and that this cannot be changed. Secondly, such a change must be supported by an active policy of rational planning and social engineering. Myrdal belonged to a generation of Swedish social scientists who had no hesitations about using the word social engineering in an unproblematic and optimistic way. "In a sense, the social engineering of the coming epoch will be nothing but the drawing of practical conclusions from the teaching of social science

42 Myrdal occasionally uses the expression 'social pathology' (see for example: *Ibid.*, p. lxxx), but it is not a technical term in *An American Dilemma*. Furthermore, Myrdal took the position that "American Negro culture (...) is a distorted development, or a pathological condition, of the general American culture" (*Ibid.*, p. 928), a position that two decades later came to be seen as highly controversial. In fact this chapter was written by Arnold Rose after Myrdal had returned to Sweden in the autumn of 1942. Cf.: Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170 f., 225 f.

43 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1009–1010.

that 'human nature' is changeable and that human deficiencies and unhappiness are, to a large degree, preventable."⁴⁴

If this reconstruction of the essential line of argument in *An American Dilemma* is correct, Myrdal seems, in several ways, to anticipate the approach to be found in Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit*: a focus on a set of ultimate values held in common and as realised in existing societal institutions and (to a lesser degree) social practices, and at the same time allowing for a critique of actual discriminatory and humiliating practices in the light of these very values and ideals.⁴⁵ On the one hand, a normative integration and cultural unity in terms of the American Creed and, on the other hand, massive misdevelopments in the form of criticisable practices of discrimination. The question we now have to ask is: What led Myrdal to embark upon this line of argument? As we will see his motives were very different from those of Honneth.⁴⁶

First of all, according to Myrdal, a difference must be made between *facts* and *values*. Science is about facts, whereas valuations introduce the possibility of bias in research. Full objectivity in social research is, following Myrdal, an ideal to strive towards, but it can never be reached for the simple reason that the social scientist is part of the culture he or she lives in, including the preconceptions and biases that have a foothold in this culture. If this is the case the question arises: How to proceed? We cannot rid ourselves of all valuations. However, is there a way of bringing them under control? Myrdal's answer reads: "There is no other device for excluding biases in social sciences than to face the valuations and to introduce them as explicitly stated, specific, and sufficiently concretised value premises".⁴⁷ Not being explicit about our value premises, perhaps on the contrary assuming that we do not have any, is the safest way to introduce biases in social research. The only remedy is to

44 *Ibid.*, p. 1023. Myrdal's main target of critique was the American sociologist William G. Sumner (1840–1910), and especially his teaching that "stateways cannot change folkways", which, in Myrdal's view, in practice amounts to a do-nothing doctrine.

45 That a form of immanent critique is to be found in Myrdal has been argued by Kettonen, however without relating his approach to contemporary discussions in critical theory. Cf.: Pauli Kettonen, "The Society of Virtuous Circles", in *Models, Modernity, and the Myrdals*, pp. 160 ff. This perspective is almost completely absent from the otherwise excellent study by Walter A. Jackson. Myrdal himself, in a later text, uses the expression "immanent criticism" twice. See: Gunnar Myrdal, "Postscript", *op. cit.*, pp. 238 f.

46 Cf. primarily Appendix 2: "A Methodological Note on Facts and Valuations in Social Science", in Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1035–1064.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 1043.

make them explicit.⁴⁸ The next question then naturally becomes: How do we select our value premises? To this Myrdal answers: "The value premises should be selected by the criterion of relevance and significance to the culture under study".⁴⁹ It is thus not our personal, more or less idiosyncratic, valuations that we are asked to introduce explicitly.

Thus far Myrdal's approach seems to show very little resemblance to that of Honneth. However, the crucial move is made when it comes to specifying what is meant by *relevance* and *significance*: "Relevance is determined by the interests and ideals of actual persons and groups of persons. There is thus no need of introducing value premises which are not actually held by anybody".⁵⁰ Through the criteria of relevance the selection of value premises is connected to the valuations which people actually have in the society under study. Furthermore: "Within the circle of relevance so determined a still narrower circle of *significance* may be taken to denote such valuations which are held by substantial groups of people or by small groups with substantial social power".⁵¹ The perhaps clearest statement of Myrdal's approach is to be found in the introductory chapter of the book: "The social scientist, in his effort to lay bare concealed truths and to become maximally useful in guiding practical and political action, is prudent when, in the approach to a problem, he sticks as closely as possible to the common man's ideas and formulations, even though he knows that further investigation will carry him into tracts uncharted in the popular consciousness. There is a pragmatic common sense in people's ideas about themselves and their worries, which we cannot afford to miss when we start out to explore social reality".⁵²

In the case of *An American Dilemma* Myrdal selected, as his point of departure, the values and ideals which are actually held by almost all Americans. This corresponds to the criteria of relevance. In order not to multiply the number of relevant and significant sets of valuations, Myrdal furthermore decided to

48 It is of course far from clear why the call to be explicit about our value premises could safeguard us from hidden biases; it is difficult to be explicit about what is perhaps not fully conscious.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 1045.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 1060.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*, p. lxxii. In a later publication Myrdal writes: "by not objectifying the value premises and not pressing them into the stale grid of a doctrine, they can be more closely modelled on concrete human valuations actually held by people". See: Gunnar Myrdal, "Postscript", *op. cit.*, p. 262.

focus upon one set of value premises or, what he calls, an *instrumental norm*.⁵³ This norm or set of valuations is of course the American Creed. The values and ideals expressed in this creed have, to a large degree, been realised in the institutional structure of America and are engraved in the hearts of almost every American. Thus the creed yields to a critical application that makes it possible to criticise those institutional features and practices that are still not in accordance with it, with the ambition of bringing about a change that realises the creed in a better and more comprehensive way. “*Discrimination* has been the key word for most studies on the Negro problem. This very term—and all its synonyms and specifications—and the theoretical approach which it signifies are derived out of the precepts of the American Creed”.⁵⁴ Myrdal targets what he takes to be a gigantic misdevelopment in the American society, constituting *the moral dilemma* of the country. And he does this, not by way of an external critique, appealing to a transcendent norm or standard, but by way of an immanent critique. For Myrdal there is a moment of transcendence immanent in the very society under study and which constitutes a foothold for justified and efficient critique. Thus, in several respects *An American Dilemma* anticipates Honneth’s position in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, although the context for Myrdal was very different from the development of a theory of justice. On the other hand, who would deny that discrimination is ultimately a question about justice and injustice? In the following section I will continue my effort to situate Myrdal’s approach in *An American Dilemma* within contemporary discussions on the foundations of a critical theory of society.

3 Social Conditions as Blocking the Capacity for Critique

In the attempt to develop a critical social theory several scholars today insist on the necessity of anchoring the critique in the thoughts, practices and experiences of those who are the addressees of the theory. This applies to Axel Honneth and his ambition to continue and renew the tradition of Critical Theory, and it is also a characteristic of Luc Boltanski and collaborators in their

53 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1062 f. In retrospect Myrdal saw it as a lucky ‘historical accident’ that he could operate with just one instrumental norm: “The real difficulty, however, arises when analysis has to be based upon a number of different sets of conflicting value premises. The complexities of an analysis attempting to do this are enormous and, perhaps, not soluble, as the basic concepts themselves are determined by the value premises”. See: Gunnar Myrdal, “Postscript”, *op. cit.*, pp. 260–261.

54 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, p. 1063.

attempt to develop a sociology of critique.⁵⁵ Both Honneth and Boltanski reject the very idea of the philosopher or social scientist as a kind of mastermind who has a privileged access to the truth about the social world, a truth which at the same time is said to be hidden from, and to be more or less inaccessible to, the ordinary person. The latter is furthermore said to be the victim of ideological distortions. Thus the veil in front of the eyes of ordinary people must be lifted, and this can be done solely by the philosopher or social scientist.

The point of departure for the kind of theoretical endeavour that rejects this line of argument lies in the conviction that ordinary people are in general perfectly capable of reflecting upon and reasoning about the social world, of producing arguments for what is right and wrong about the world they live in and about the practices they are engaged in, of justifying what they think and do, of criticising what others think and do, and sometimes, of criticising what they themselves used to think and do. This point of view is also to be found in Gunnar Myrdal. "Moral discussion", he writes in the first appendix to *An American Dilemma*, "goes on in all groups from the intimate family circle to the international conference table. Modern means of intellectual communication have increased the volume and intensity of such moral interrelations".⁵⁶ As we have already seen it is Myrdal's point of view that Americans are in general stern moralists, who try to justify for themselves and for others the opinions they hold and the actions they take. They are in general no judgmental dopes that simply act out that which habits and culture, folkways and mores, "tell" them to do; rather they are individuals reflecting on moral issues, on what they consider to be the right and wrong thing to do in general as well as in different concrete situations. There is an on-going moral debate in the minds of most Americans, and they try to take a well-considered stance on important issues. "People want to have 'reasons' for the valuations they hold", Myrdal writes, "and they usually express only those valuations for which they think they have 'reasons'. To serve as opinions, specific valuations are selected, are formulated in words and are motivated by acceptable 'reasons'".⁵⁷ There can be no doubt but that Myrdal shares the conviction of many of today's advocates of critical theory that ordinary people are not only fully capable of reflecting, but actually do reflect, on what they are doing and try to justify it for themselves and others.

55 On the two research programmes see: Martin Hartmann, "Rechtfertigungsordnungen und Anerkennungsordnungen: Zum Vergleich zweier Theoriemodelle", in *WestEnd: Neue Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2008, pp. 104–119.

56 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, p. 1028.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 1027.

Robin Celikates, basically in agreement with Honneth and Boltanski, but who also criticises the latter for simply presupposing that ordinary people under *all* circumstances are capable of taking a critical stance towards the social world they inhabit, has raised the important question: How come the judgement of ordinary people sometimes seems to be blocked? What is, so to speak, blocking their better insight?⁵⁸ In his answer, Celikates argues that a critical theory must reflect on the social conditions required for the *development* and *exercise* of reflexive capabilities, i.e., the capacities for justification and critique and the corresponding ability to exercise them. To be more precise, it is an important task for a critical theory of society to discover, analyse and criticise the social conditions that prevent, render difficult or block these reflexive capabilities. Attention is thus to be directed at second-order pathologies, as structurally conditioned deficits of reflexion, by way of a second-order reflexion, in the form of a temporarily privileged position for the critical theorist, giving rise to a second-order critique, which is to be conceived of as being a dimension of the kind of on-going critique that takes place in ordinary life among ordinary people.⁵⁹ The goal of this second-order critique is to bring forth a state of *reflexive unacceptability* among those who are the addressees of the theory, an explicit cognitive dissonance between different convictions, emotions and/or modes of behaviour, or between social conditions and the self-understanding of actors, in order to trigger off further processes of reflexion which in turn can (not must) give rise to a *transformative praxis*, i.e., to a change of the very social conditions that initially obstructed or blocked the critical reflexive capacity. Celikates calls this model of a critical theory of society *reconstructive* in order to distinguish it, both from an external critique that argues for the necessity of a radical break with the reasoning of ordinary people, and from an internal critique, that follows too closely in the footsteps of those who are the addressees of the theory. "The reconstruction is an attempt to make an implicit normative content explicit".⁶⁰ In this sense the reconstruction is a

58 Cf.: Robin Celikates, *Kritik als soziale Praxis: Gesellschaftliche Selbstverständigung und kritische Theorie*, Frankfurt am Main Campus Verlag, 2009, pp. 136–153, 166–173.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 184, 229.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 187. In Celikates' view Honneth's version of a critical theory of society is too *monological* in its build up; it privileges certain relations of recognition as constitutive conditions for personal identity, conditions that exist independently of the self-understanding of the actors. Cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 188–195. However, I think that Honneth, by gradually moving away from an anthropological to a more historical-social (institutional) concept of recognition is today less vulnerable to such a critique.

second-order construction that goes beyond the actual self-understandings of the addressees as well as tries to stay in dialogical contact with them.

Returning once again to Myrdal the questions can be posed: What hinders most white Americans, especially in the South, from following their better convictions and treating black people, not as second-class citizens, but as free and equal human beings? How come the American Creed, as realised in many of the most important societal institutions, is not the guiding-star of their actual behaviour? How come social practices of discrimination are not perceived as being what they are: as unjust? Several factors, according to Myrdal, are at work here. I will draw attention to just a few of them and relate these to the model for a critical theory of society as found in Celikates.

In *An American Dilemma* we find several reports and stories which seem to lend support to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as more or less bodily anchored dispositions to think, feel and act in certain ways (as well as *not* to think, feel and act in certain other ways). In many cases the acquired habitus seems to have an explanatory potential. The following quotation, taken from the preface to a master's thesis (from 1934) by a white Southerner looking back on his former prejudices, expresses in the form of reminiscences a specific habitus, ingrown from early childhood, and relating to the colour line: "I have always understood that a Negro who touches a white woman must die. It is something that we learn in the South without knowing how or when or where. I have heard the statement made by men in the community who were models of right living. Somewhere out of the past this idea came, born of pride in our own culture and possibly of an unrecognised fear that it might not persist. It was intensified by the chivalric ideal of womanhood which has been traditional in the South".⁶¹ Here we find a specific habitus conveyed from early on in upbringing and strengthened by role models, group pressure and the will to conform. It is a kind of symbolic violence done to every white boy in the South more or less from the very first day he starts to breathe, and forming a habitus which later finds expression in the symbolic or physical violence done to black people. And still it is possible, as the example above shows, to break out of this habitus, to reach a position of reflexive distance to it, a distance that allows for a critical distance to such a mind-set and such practices.

To the workings of habitus must be added another set of factors that block white Americans from following what they in their hearts affirm or that convince them that in specific situations they are doing the right thing in following lower-level valuations. There is an obvious cognitive dissonance between the American Creed and the lower-level valuations that legitimise practices of

61 Quoted in Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, p. 1194.

discrimination and humiliation. Thus, in order to make this tension, if not this outright contradiction, liveable it is necessary to reduce it or find ways to avoid it. The accomplishment of this is the function of defence reactions, rationalisations and ideologies. "The expressed valuations and beliefs brought forward as motives for specific action or inaction are selected in relation to the expediencies of the occasion. They are the 'good' reasons rather than the 'true' reasons; in short, they are 'rationalizations'".⁶² The *mechanism of rationalisation* involves the attempt to create order in the household of valuations by way of what is taken to be good reasons for doing or not doing certain things. In practice many, perhaps most, white Americans do not stick to their most general valuations, the American Creed, but follow lower-level valuations that back up various forms of prejudiced thinking and behaviour. "When the valuations are conflicting, as they normally are, beliefs serve the rationalization function of bridging illogicalities".⁶³ However, beliefs are often biased; they refer to ideas about how reality actually is that are not true, for example stated in the form of "Negroes *are*" such and such, and that this cannot be changed.⁶⁴ "The race dogma", i.e., the black man's supposed racial inferiority "is nearly the only way out for a people so moralistically equalitarian, if it is not prepared to live up to its faith".⁶⁵ Myrdal actually diagnoses a *need for race prejudice*; it is a defence reaction on the part of white Americans against their own better convictions and valuations that fulfils the function of mitigating the cognitive dissonance. According to Myrdal, the popular theories and beliefs constitute the key causal mechanism in interracial relations; the beliefs are causes, in the sense of good reasons, for prejudiced behaviour in various situations.

This poses a number of tasks for the social scientist and for scientific research, one of which of course is to criticise those beliefs when they can be shown to be false. "Another task (...) is to study the racial beliefs themselves as social facts: to record them carefully; to analyse their causation and explain their role in people's emotions, thoughts, and actions; their 'function' in the caste order of American society".⁶⁶ It seems to be Myrdal's firm conviction that by pointing out and correcting popular but false beliefs the prejudiced ways of acting will run into a kind of legitimization crisis. This amounts to bringing forth a state of *reflexive unacceptability* that might (not must) give rise to a change:

62 *Ibid.*, p. 1028.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 1030.

64 See especially Ch. 4: "Racial Beliefs", in *ibid.*, pp. 83–112. Myrdal lists six statements which are held to be true in order to justify discrimination. See: *ibid.*, pp. 102f.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

a change of mind and a change of behaviour. "When supportive beliefs are drawn away, people will have to re-adjust their value hierarchies and, eventually, their behaviour".⁶⁷ In such a situation the more general valuations, the ones that people cherish the most, will tend to gain the upper hand, and the valuations at a lower level (which are often prejudiced) will have to give way: "This educational objective must be achieved in the face of the psychic resistance mobilised by the people who feel an urgent need to retain their biased beliefs in order to justify their way of life".⁶⁸ In this it is Myrdal, the social engineer and paternalistic reformer who speaks. However, and this is what brings Myrdal close to reconstructive critical social theory, the social scientist has, so to speak, an ally inside the ordinary American, and this is of course once again the American Creed, whose tenets are on the side of science and humanity.⁶⁹ Without such a foothold inside those whose mind-set and behaviour is to be changed, the social scientist could have little hope of reaching and actually influencing the mass of people. What the latter already think and cherish in their innermost hearts comes to meet what the social scientist is teaching and hoping for. The preconditions for a process of moral reflexion that changes a life are already there. It is in fact Myrdal's firm conviction that "this process of moral criticism", "this democratic process of open discussion" will result in the more general valuations gaining ground at the expense of lower level valuations, rationalisations and ideologies.⁷⁰ Furthermore, this is "the principal reason why we, who are convinced democrats, hold that public discussion is purifying and that democracy itself provides a moral education of the people".⁷¹

4 Myrdal, Honneth, and Immanent Critique

Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* is an example of immanent critique, in the sense that it does not presuppose and relate to a norm or standard of critique which is external to the society that is criticised or which is foreign to the people whose beliefs and practices are criticised. Thus for Myrdal it is not a question of the American Creed itself becoming the object of critique. The creed is the norm or standard of critique which is, to a large extent, realised

67 *Ibid.*, p. 1031.

68 *Ibid.*

69 NB.: "With minor variations, some of which, however, are not without importance, the American Creed is the common democratic creed. 'American ideals' are just humane ideals (...) The American Creed is older and wider than America itself" (*ibid.*, p. 25).

70 *Ibid.*, p. 1029.

71 *Ibid.*

in the institutional structures of American society, but which, at the same time, is very far from being realised in the actual practices of many, perhaps most white Americans. Looking at the relations between white and black Americans it is furthermore clear to Myrdal that America has not become untrue to its own ideals, but has in fact never really been true to them: this is the task ahead. However, when Myrdal argues that the American Creed expresses not only American ideals but “humane ideals” and that it is “older and wider than America itself”, he takes up a *universalistic* position that is not backed up by his way of argumentation in the book as a whole.⁷² Selecting value premises by criteria of relevance and significance and being explicit about them, in no way allows for elevating certain values into universal principles. In fact, by claiming that he is dealing with universal humane ideals Myrdal has left the analysis of morals (what *is*) and become a teacher *in* morality (what *ought* to be).⁷³

In my view the form of immanent critique to be found in *An American Dilemma* comes close to the one that Axel Honneth favours in *Das Recht der Freiheit*. For all his pointing out of social pathologies and misdevelopments the latter is not aiming at a critique of the standard of critique in the form of the modern notion of autonomy or free self-determination. Thus Honneth does not have in mind a kind of critique which argues that the ideal and ultimate value of autonomy is of such a kind that in its realisation it gives rise, *by necessity*, to in some way deficient institutions and practices (this is only the case when the notion of freedom is one-sidedly interpreted as legal or moral freedom).⁷⁴ Rather, his more limited ambition is to pave the way for, and be a contributing factor in, transforming society in such a way that its institutions and practices better, or in a more comprehensive way, realise the ultimate value of autonomy (interpreted as social freedom).⁷⁵ Honneth has described

72 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

73 This tension to be found in Myrdal is elaborated in an interesting way in Ola Sigurdson, *Den lyckliga filosofin*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136, 144 f., 149 ff.

74 A more far-reaching notion of immanent critique is outlined in Rahel Jaeggi, “Was ist Ideologiekritik”, in Rahel Jaeggi and Tilo Wesche (eds.), *Was ist Kritik?*, Frankfurt am Main Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009, pp. 285 ff. She talks of norms that in their realization by necessity turn against their own original intention. In this case the critique is directed at and intends to transform both a deficient reality and the standard of critique.

75 In addition to an immanent critique Honneth considers as legitimate a disclosing form of critique, whose aim it is to open our eyes to new ways of seeing social reality, and in the light of which society and our way of life can be seen as deficient or pathological. This kind of social critique, however, is not part of the theory of justice. Cf.: Axel Honneth, “The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society: The Dialectic of Enlightenment in the Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism”, in *Constellations*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2000, pp. 116–127.

his own position as “a kind of Hegelianism without a philosophy of history”.⁷⁶ Myrdal no doubt would have been surprised to find himself situated in the orbit of Hegelianism. Nevertheless, if the reading of *An American Dilemma* presented above is correct, he belongs there.

In conclusion, the view of Myrdal as a paternalistic social engineer is not wholly unfounded; but it must be complemented with the view of him as a critical theorist in a surprisingly contemporary sense. It is not least this very tension that makes him well-worth being the object of further studies. Furthermore, Myrdal most probably saw a common fund of basic values, not very different from those making up the American Creed, as being present in Swedish society. And, as long as this community of values is not fully realised in the existing societal institutions and practices there exists a surplus of validity and a space for immanent critique. Such an approach is, as far as I can see, fully in line with Honneth's in *Das Recht der Freiheit*.

76 Luc Boltanski and Axel Honneth, “Soziologie der Kritik oder Kritische Theorie? Ein Gespräch mit Robin Celikates”, in *Was ist Kritik?* p. 98.

Writing History from a Normative Point of View

The Reconstructive Method in Axel Honneth's Das Recht der Freiheit

Jørgen Pedersen

In his recent book *Das Recht der Freiheit*, Axel Honneth challenges the dominant contemporary theories of justice, such as those by John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Honneth's aim is to revitalise G.W.F. Hegel's political philosophy as it was developed in *The Philosophy of Right*. His approach is guided by three central (Hegelian) intuitions. First, the standard conception of autonomy focusing on negative or reflexive freedom must be supplemented by a conception of social freedom. Second, a theory of justice cannot restrict itself to the political and public sphere; it must be broader in scope and must include the possibility of achieving freedom in personal relations as well as in the sphere of the market. Third, a theory of justice cannot rely on Kantian constructivism but should instead employ what Honneth refers to as normative reconstruction.¹

The purpose of this chapter is to outline, clarify, and discuss the method of normative reconstruction in Honneth's social and political philosophy.² Despite enormous recent interest in Honneth's thinking, his conception of

* I am grateful for thorough discussions with Jonas Jakobsen, Odin Lysaker, and Torjus Midtgarden while working on this chapter.

1 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp, 2011, Ch. 1.

2 In the clarification of normative reconstruction, I will focus primarily on Axel Honneth's book *Das Recht der Freiheit* as well as a recent interview that clarifies the status of the procedure. See: Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and, Paul Sörensen, "Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit: Eine Heranführung an Honneths Das Recht der Freiheit", in *Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2012, pp. 247–270. Because Honneth has also clarified the method of normative reconstruction in other works, I will include these sources in the following discussion. See: Axel Honneth, "Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso: On the Idea of Critique in the Frankfurt School", in *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009; Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010/2000.

normative reconstruction has been neglected.³ With the publication of *Das Recht der Freiheit*, this lack of attention is bound to change as Honneth gives methodological concerns a central position in his new book. However, as Honneth has made clear in a recent interview, the methodology of normative reconstruction is not elaborated explicitly in the book. Instead, it is simply demonstrated at work.⁴ Thus, a systematic outline of the method is required to assess the potential of his alternative approach.

Instead of elaborating on the methodology of normative reconstruction, Honneth refers to Jürgen Habermas' method as a similar approach.⁵ Thus, in a first step, I will outline Habermas' reconstructive method to provide a preliminary understanding of reconstruction. In a second step, I focus on Honneth's procedure of normative reconstruction. I explain the intentions behind his methodological approach and demonstrate how Honneth conceives of normative reconstruction in the sphere of personal relations, the market, as well as the public and political sphere. The most important methodological difference between Habermas and Honneth is that normative reconstruction, in Honneth, is understood as "a way of writing history from a strongly normative point of view".⁶ In a third and final step, I discuss Honneth's approach against Habermas' reconstructivism.⁷ I argue that Honneth's account of democratic *Sittlichkeit* provides potential for understanding why actors are willing to participate in democratic will-formation. However, I criticise the way he attempts to reconstruct ideals in the market sphere.⁸

3 An important exception is: Rutger Claassen, "Social Freedom and the Demands of Justice: A Study of Axel Honneth's *Recht der Freiheit*", in *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* (forthcoming 2013).

4 Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and Paul Sörensen, "Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit", *op. cit.*, p. 273.

5 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

6 Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and Paul Sörensen, "Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit", *op. cit.*, p. 276.

7 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss normative reconstruction against Kantian constructivism. For an attempt at such a discussion, see: Rutger Claassen, "Social Freedom and the Demands of Justice", *op. cit.*

8 I should emphasise at the outset that my aim in this chapter is to start a conversation about important methodological issues, not to present a fixed and complete understanding of these issues. The reception of Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit* is in its infancy, and the understanding of normative reconstruction is a complex and problematic task due to the lack of explicit exposition of the method.

1 Habermas and Rational Reconstruction

A common feature of reconstructive theories is the Hegelian assumption that normative content is written into social practices and institutions. According to Hegel, philosophy cannot issue “instructions on how the world ought to be: philosophy, at any rate, always comes too late to perform this function”.⁹ Instead, philosophy should reconstruct what already is—that is, the normative content of given practices and institutions.

In a famous interview, Habermas clarifies his own project in a similar way:

As opposed to my famous American colleagues such as Rawls or Nozick, I’ve never had any ambition of sketching out a normative political theory. Although it’s perfectly sensible, I don’t design the norms of a ‘well-ordered society’ on the drafting table. It’s more a matter of reconstruction of actual conditions.¹⁰

Habermas uses the term reconstruction in at least two different, but related ways. First, it is employed as a *reading strategy*, as a way to read classics and other important figures that have produced important texts relevant for his own research programmes. Habermas’ reading of Noam Chomsky, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg are examples in point. In this respect, Habermas reconstructs by taking different theoretical positions apart and bringing them back together after correcting their fundamental flaws.¹¹ Habermas refers to this approach as a “history of theory with a systemic intent”.¹² To Habermas, this strategy is as important for scientific research as other approaches. It demonstrates the importance of the methodological approaches developed in the

9 G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 23.

10 Jürgen Habermas, *The Past as Future*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, p. 101. This quote is both a good illustration of the intentions behind Habermas’ rational reconstruction and an illustration of how he misunderstands Rawls. (The later) Rawls is also concerned with explicating latent ideals in modern constitutional democracies. The description of Rawls as a traditional normative theorist who constructs his theory of a well-ordered society without regard to reality is therefore misleading. I have developed this argument elsewhere. See: Jørgen Pedersen, “Justification and Application: The Revival of the Rawls-Habermas Debate”, in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2012, pp. 399–432.

11 Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Heinemann: London, 1979, p. 95.

12 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Vol. 1), Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984, p. 140.

humanities, and the different readings require validation to establish their authority.

Habermas characterises this reading strategy as the “normal way of dealing with a theory that needs revision”.¹³ In my opinion, this is a bit too modest because there is a particular twist to the readings that Habermas presents, which consists of the search for implicit themes or thoughts that are later abandoned. Recently, Jean-Philippe Deranty has provided an interesting description of Honneth’s reading strategy that is also valid for Habermas’ reading of the classics. Deranty argues that Honneth’s exegetical reconstructions are based on pinpointing a “fork in the conceptual road”. They consist of finding in a certain text “highly evocative, programmatic indications not fully realised or later abandoned”.¹⁴

An example is Habermas’ reconstruction of Hegel, where Habermas claims that in the Jena period, Hegel introduced the possibility of an intersubjectivistic turn, overcoming the transcendental mentalism of Kant, but later “gambled away what from hindsight at least appear to be his original gains”.¹⁵

Second, Habermas employs the procedure of rational reconstruction as a way to reconstruct conditions of possibilities of certain practices. In his account of communicative action, he reconstructs conditions of possibilities for communication aimed at consensus; in discourse ethics, he identifies the conditions of possibilities for regulating human action through norms; and in his theory of deliberative democracy, he identifies conditions of possibilities for coordinating modern, pluralistic societies through positive law. In all of these different research programmes, he uses a particular type of transcendental-pragmatic argument.

In his reconstructive enterprise, Habermas is concerned with various types of competencies as well as the collective knowledge of traditions. In the first instance, rational reconstruction aims to uncover intuitive competences carried by speaking and acting subjects. Habermas describes these competencies as pre-theoretical know-how, making it the job of philosophy and the

13 Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, op. cit., p. 95.

14 Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication: A Critical Study of Axel Honneth’s Social Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, p. 3. In his later writings, Habermas tends to drop the prefix rational and speak of reconstructive theories. The term rational signals that the focus is on the rational aspects inherent in a given practice. For example, Habermas understands the raising and the defending of claims as a rational enterprise, and as a reconstructive theorist, he is interested in this rational aspect of language use.

15 Jürgen Habermas, “From Kant to Hegel and Back Again The Move toward Detranscendentalization”, in *Truth and Justification*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003, p. 176.

reconstructive sciences to reconstruct and thus to make explicit the underlying rules that are presuppositions for such competencies:

Starting primarily from the intuitive knowledge of competent subjects—competent in terms of judgment, action and language—and secondarily from systematic knowledge handed down by culture, the reconstructive sciences explain the presumably universal basis of rational experience and judgment, as well as of action and linguistic communication.¹⁶

Thus, rational reconstruction proceeds on the assumption of normative content located in the deep structure of different types of practices. This normative content is found in different competencies, which may be located at a general level involving cognitive and linguistic practices or at a more institutionalised level that focuses, for example, on presuppositions for coordinating human interactions through the medium of law. At the general level, Habermas is reconstructing the competencies subjects must have as language users, whereas on the institutionalised level, Habermas is reconstructing the competencies subjects must have as participants in democratic practices. In the first instance, the reconstruction operates through conceptual analysis, whereas in the latter, the reconstruction comes closer to empirical research.¹⁷

What type of method would be suitable for eliciting such competencies? In answering this question, Habermas takes pains to demonstrate the difference between rational reconstruction and traditional hermeneutic interpretation. The relevant research must proceed on the assumption that its object is symbolically structured, requiring a performative attitude from the perspective of the participant. This assumption is shared with, and derived from, insight developed in hermeneutics. However, rational reconstruction does not search for meaning in a particular text or an utterance. Instead, it focuses on underlying rules of which the relevant subjects are not reflexively aware but that they have an intuitive ability to master. These rules yield a normative standard that makes it possible to criticise judgements, actions, or utterances.¹⁸

The underlying assumption is that there is a difference between a subject's ability to master a certain competence and the explicit knowledge of the rules

16 Jürgen Habermas, "Philosophy as Stand-in and Interpreter", in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, pp. 15–16.

17 Jürgen Habermas, "Concluding Comments on Empirical Approaches to Deliberative Politics", in *Acta Politica*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2005, pp. 384–392, p. 385.

18 Jürgen Habermas, "Einleitung", in *Sprachtheoretische Grundlegung der Soziologie*, Frankfurt am Main Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009, pp. 24–25.

that make the same competence possible. As an example, take the competence of forming a grammatically correct sentence. If a person made the utterance 'Saw you the black cat?', we would typically reply by stating that the correct thing to say would be 'Did you see the black cat?'. Thus, we have an example of criticism based on the correct understanding of grammar. According to Habermas, a number of different practices have a set of underlying rules that the philosopher must identify and use as a point of departure for critique.

Another example is the way Habermas conceives of rules and structures governing the practice of democracy. According to Habermas, democracy presupposes a system of rights that can be reconstructed and employed as a standard and point of departure for criticism. Such criticism would, for example, be directed at governments that were unable to institutionalise rights that fulfil the explicated standards. To understand this, we need to consider how Habermas presents his system of rights, a system that "should contain precisely the rights citizens must confer on one another if they want to legitimately regulate their interactions and life contexts by means of positive law".¹⁹ This takes us to the core of Habermas' discourse theory of law and democracy:

1. Basic rights that result from the politically autonomous elaboration of the *right to the greatest possible measure of equal individual liberties*.
2. Basic rights that result from the politically autonomous elaboration of the *status of a member* in a voluntary association of consociates under law.
3. Basic rights that result immediately from the *actionability* of rights and from the politically autonomous elaboration of individual *legal protection*.
4. Basic rights to equal opportunities to participate in the process of opinion and will formation, in which citizens exercise their *political autonomy* and through which they generate legitimate law.
5. Basic rights to the provision of living conditions that are socially, technologically, and ecologically safeguarded, insofar as the current circumstances make this necessary, if citizens are to have equal opportunities to utilise the civil rights listed in (1) to (4).²⁰

19 Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory on Law and Democracy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996/1992, p. 122.

20 Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–123.

When Habermas speaks of the legal form, he is referring to positive law. Positive law is of vital importance in modernity because, in contrast to morality, it offers the subject two different reasons to obey. First, it must be possible to obey out of insight; that is, one obeys because of the rationality inherent in the law. Second, it must be possible to obey simply due to the threat of sanctions. Positive law leaves the question of motivation to the participants. Furthermore, the legitimacy of law depends upon the process of the lawmaking procedure, not upon some internal connection to morality.

In modern societies, Habermas observes, there is no functional equivalent to positive law. Furthermore, he claims that the “legal medium as such presupposes rights that define the status of legal persons as bearers of rights”.²¹ This means that the legal form presupposes the concept of rights in a specific sense, such as the right to private autonomy, which is listed in category 1–3. These are rights that legal subjects have as *addressees* of law, which means that they can claim these rights against one another. According to Habermas, there is no legitimate law without these rights.

However, the legal code specified in 1–3 cannot count as legitimate rights before the rights specified in 4 are in place. In other words, the rights specified in 1–3 that secure private autonomy are legitimate when they are given to citizens with the right to political autonomy specified in (4). This is where the principle of democracy comes into play, “at the heart of the system of rights”, according to Habermas. This principle states, “Only those statutes may claim legitimacy that can meet with the assent of all citizens in a discursive process of legislation that in turn has been legally constituted”.²² Thus, at this step, subjects become the *authors* of law. In our context, it is also important to note that political rights ground the status of free and equal citizens.²³ The last category of rights (5), derived by Habermas from the other four, refers to welfare and other necessary preconditions for the practice of the four other types of rights.

Thus, Habermas has presented what he refers to as the “logical genesis of rights”, which “comprises a circular process in which the legal code (...) and the mechanisms for producing legitimate law (...) are co-originally constituted”.²⁴ As we have seen, this means that the negative liberties outlined in the first three categories of rights are constitutive of the fourth category, and *vice versa*.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

By referring to the process as circular, Habermas emphasises the co-originality of private and public autonomy; neither can be given priority over the other.²⁵

It is also important to note that Habermas does not conceive of the reconstructed system of rights as a fixed and concrete set of substantial principles. He writes:

We must hold on to *two* things: on the one hand, the first three categories of rights are unsaturated placeholders for the specification of particular basic rights; they are thus more like legal principles that guide the framers of constitutions. On the other hand, these framers must, without prejudice to their sovereignty, orient themselves by the above-mentioned principles insofar as they make use of the legal medium at all.²⁶

The reconstructed categories of rights are therefore necessary presuppositions for subjects who want to coordinate their lives through positive law. By referring to the first three categories of rights as unsaturated, Habermas wants to emphasise that the framework reconstructed here must be “interpreted and given concrete shape by a political legislature in response to changing circumstances”.²⁷ The citizens themselves must fill the abstract framework with specific content, but they must do so through an explication of these three categories, filling this framework, for example, with freedom of choice or the right to property, for example. Thus, to Habermas, public autonomy is always an interpretation or elaboration of these unsaturated categories of rights.

Step 1 in Habermas’ project is thus “to rationally reconstruct the self-understanding of these modern legal orders”.²⁸ However, the project cannot become a critical project until this self-understanding is contrasted with the way democracy works in the real world. Therefore, in step 2, Habermas is concerned with identifying “the tension between the normative self-understanding of the constitutional state, as explained in discourse theoretical terms, and the social facticity of the political processes that run their course along more or less institutional lines”.²⁹ One may thus expect an empirical description to be contrasted with the reconstructively established ideal. However, this is not

25 For an interesting discussion of the circularity in Habermas’ argument, see: Todd Hedrick, *Rawls and Habermas: Reason, Pluralism and the Claims of Political Philosophy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, pp. 115–118.

26 Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, *op. cit.*, p. 126 (my emphasis).

27 *Ibid.*, 125.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 288.

Habermas' preferred approach. He is more concerned with presenting ways of studying the complex reality encompassing the tension between the factual and the valid. Similarly, the second step in this reconstruction process involves more than simply demonstrating the gap between counterfactual ideals and reality. Habermas wants to present possibilities for 'factualising the counterfactual', and he offers a series of constructive proposals for how to reduce the gap between ideals and reality.

2 Honneth and Normative Reconstruction

According to my understanding of Honneth's method of normative reconstruction, it is designed to fulfil, in a more genuine way than Habermas' approach, what is referred to as step two above. To do so, Honneth provides a description of historical processes that does not primarily or exclusively focus on constitutive ideals but that aims to demonstrate how these ideals have been institutionalised and established in the course of history. The historical narrative Honneth presents is designed to take account of the way the ideals have been institutionalised in practice. However, before I explain this in more detail and introduce an example of the type of historical narrative Honneth provides, I will attempt to clarify the intentions behind the method of normative reconstruction.

As mentioned, Honneth clarifies his method of normative reconstruction first by saying that it is similar to Habermas' procedure. He goes on to note that his reconstruction does not confine itself to a reconstruction of the norms that are constitutive for the constitutional state (*Rechtsstaat*) and the public sphere, as Habermas does. In addition to this sphere, according to Honneth, a theory of justice must also include a reconstruction of "all the central institutional value spheres" in a modern society.³⁰

Now, the central question is which institutional value spheres are central and thus become the object of reconstruction. Honneth's answer points towards the spheres that incorporate values and ideals that contribute to the reproduction of society.³¹ Elaborating on this idea, Honneth suggests that normative reconstruction must fulfil two different tasks. First, it must justify why individual freedom is the principle from which we must identify the decisive institutional value spheres of society. According to Honneth, in modern societies, the value of individual freedom is the core value on which social order

30 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., p. 120.

31 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., p. 20.

is legitimised. However, individual freedom has been interpreted in different ways and has been institutionalised differently in the various spheres of society. Honneth claims that three conceptions of individual freedom have been dominant throughout history: negative, reflexive, and social freedom.³² One is negatively free when the state or other persons do not restrict one's goals and ambitions. One is morally free when it is possible, through a reflexive activity, to decide what is right or wrong. Finally, social freedom can only be achieved through institutionally mediated exchange with others. This first step of normative reconstruction is presented in the first part of *Das Recht der Freiheit*.³³

Second, a normative reconstruction must clarify the spheres of society for which the idea of individual freedom is constitutive. Roughly, in line with Hegel, Honneth singles out the personal sphere of family and friendship, the economic sphere of the market, and the political and public sphere as spheres where the idea of individual freedom plays a constitutive role; without these spheres, modern society would not be able to reproduce itself. Crucially, this second step of reconstruction must include the historical process of conflict and the realisation of the normative principles that operate in the different social spheres.³⁴ Normative reconstruction, in this latter sense, is presented in the second major part of the book.

In contrast to the dominant theories of deliberative democracy developed, for example, by Habermas, Honneth employs Hegel to demonstrate that the realisation of social freedom through democratic will formation is dependent upon the realisation of social freedom in the two other spheres:

The relationship between the three spheres is more complicated [than allowed for by theories of deliberative democracy], because the realisation of social freedom in the public sphere presupposes that the principles of social freedom in the sphere of personal relations and the sphere of the market is at least halfway realised.³⁵

The point is that a well-functioning democratic will formation is dependent upon pre-political presuppositions or experiences. To understand why citizens are willing to participate in political processes of deliberation and decision-making, we must have recourse to the experiences the actors achieve through

³² *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³³ Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and Paul Sörensen, "Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit", *op. cit.*, p. 273.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 473.

the personal sphere of family and friendship as well as in the economic sphere of the market. Thus, Honneth demonstrates how the social must be understood as a precondition for the political.

This approach obviously signals an important shift in Honneth's normative reconstruction, which I can only briefly comment on here. Honneth's approach is Hegelian in terms of the fundamental method and with regard to the key institutional structure that constitutes the object of reconstruction. To Honneth, the relevant normative content to be reconstructed must be located in the spheres of family and friendship, the economic sphere of the market, and the political and public sphere. In contrast, Habermas is not interested in explicating the normative resources inherent in family and friendship, and he continues to treat the market as a sphere without much normative potential, although he has modified his position from his account of the market as "a norm-free structure".³⁶ Thus, Habermas departs from the idea of *Sittlichkeit* associated with Hegelian approaches.

To Hegel, it does not make sense to attempt to grasp the proper ends and functions of the state without recourse to family and civil society—Hegel's equivalent of what Honneth refers to as the economic sphere of the market. This is because a rational state presupposes individuals willing to work for the common good, and the willingness to work for the common good requires individuals who develop identities in which they see their relations with others as noninstrumental.³⁷ Honneth follows Hegel on this point and employs the idea of *Sittlichkeit* to criticise Habermas and other theories of deliberative democracy, which, in his account, treat necessary pre-political experiences as a "lucky coincident" and not as necessities from a normative point of view.³⁸

36 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

37 My account of 'ethical life' is indebted to Frederick Neuhouser. See: Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000.

38 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 472, fn. 393. For an elaboration of how the social must be seen as a precondition for the political, compare the final section of *Das Recht der Freiheit*, "Politische Kultur: Ein Ausblick". See: *Ibid.*, pp. 612–624. Honneth had presented a similar idea in his reconstruction of John Dewey: "Society's members must have been able to *see in advance* that through their cooperative actions they were pursuing a common goal, in order to understand the establishment of democratic institutions of self-organization as a means for finding a political solution to their problems of social coordination" (my emphasis). See: Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today", in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, pp. 218–239.

In the next section, I return to Honneth's examples of necessary pre-political experiences.

Focusing on the way individual freedom has been institutionalised in the three different spheres, Honneth has recourse to two types of material. First, he works with what he calls foundational documents (*intellektuellen Gründungsdokumente*), which include a study of philosophers and sociologists who have provided important insights into the sphere under investigation.³⁹ Prominent examples include Niklas Luhmann's *Liebe als Passion* for the sphere of family and friendship and Habermas' *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* for the political and public sphere, as well as Adam Smith and Hegel with regard to the market. The reconstructions Honneth performs using this type of material resemble what I have referred to above as reconstruction as a reading strategy.

The second type of material is the study of different social practices. Here, it seems, Honneth follows two different strategies. The first is to reconstruct constitutive ideals that already operate in a given practice. This strategy is similar to Habermas' reconstructions. However, as I will demonstrate below, he also reconstructs the different types of well-founded claims proposed by various actors operating in the given practice: "The ideal is established through an attempt to bring out the well-founded claims put forward to realise social freedom in a given sphere".⁴⁰

If this understanding is correct, Honneth's normative reconstruction can be analysed as a three-step process. First, Honneth identifies norms that must be understood as constitutive for the realisation of individual freedom in the given sphere. As we have seen above, this identification or reconstruction of norms inherent in given practices can be established in two different ways. Crucially—this is the second step—this strategy involves a demonstration of the unfulfilled potential in a given practice. Therefore, the reconstructed claims introduce criteria or ideals that must be realised in the future. The final and specifically historical step taken by Honneth includes a careful outline of how the historical development within a given sphere oscillates between the ideal and the pathological. In the following, I will attempt to outline how this strategy is implemented with regard to the three spheres.

39 Honneth includes literary sources and refers, for example, to Friedrich Schiller as an important author who demonstrated the importance of love for the realization of freedom. See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

40 Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and Paul Sörensen, "Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit", *op. cit.*, p. 283.

2.1 *The Personal Sphere of Family and Friendship*

The personal sphere of family and friendship is where the individual first experiences social freedom.⁴¹ This sphere can be differentiated into three forms: friendship, intimate relationships, and family relations. Each form offers different ways for the individual to intersubjectively realise her particularity. According to Honneth, the condition for the realisation of individual freedom through the personal sphere of family and friendship has been completely altered since the beginning of the 20th Century.⁴² It is therefore necessary to provide a genealogy of how each form has developed. In the following, I shall limit myself to an analysis of how Honneth normatively reconstructs the potential for realising social freedom through friendship.

To characterise the historical development of friendship, Honneth employs the established distinction between ancient and modern forms of friendship. Broadly speaking, the ancient form of friendship dominates through the middle ages and is primarily characterised as utility-based friendship.⁴³ Friendship is reserved for men and can only be established within one's own rank (*Stand*). The ancient form of freedom is not a sphere in which social freedom can be realised because it is not possible to enter and exit these relations freely and because the establishment of such relations is done in order to achieve external benefits.⁴⁴

Contrary to the ancient form of friendship, the modern form of friendship offers important possibilities to achieve social freedom and is characterised by Honneth as "the perhaps most important ferment of democratic *Sittlichkeit*".⁴⁵ The following passage demonstrates how Honneth reconstructs and makes explicit the norms that hold the modern, private form of friendship together:

The subjects master intuitively the normative rules of 'true' friendship. They intuitively know that they owe their friends concern and attention about important issues in their life, and they know that they must treat sensitive information as confidential and not give it away to third parties. They also know that they must support their friends through council and care when they experience crises in their lives, and they know that they

41 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., p. 233.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 241.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

must be sympathetic towards friends even though they do not understand their individual decisions.⁴⁶

The object of reconstruction is thus the norms that constitute the modern form of friendship. These consist of the subjects' intuitive competencies regarding the rules that govern social interactions between friends. Thus, the task for the reconstructive theorist is to render these implicit norms explicit. Honneth's claim is therefore that norms such as trust, sympathy, and sincerity constitute necessary conditions for the modern form of friendship. When interaction between friends is coordinated based on these norms, it enables social freedom because it makes it possible for subjects to open themselves up and to ask for advice and counselling based on a sharing of their inner feelings and emotions:

The freedom gained consists in the opportunity to share ones feelings and inner emotions unconditionally. As such, these relationships constitute a particular experience; they evolve without explicit attention, are not possible to articulate as a separate experience, and can only be discerned indirectly as a sudden relaxant feeling of easiness so typically associated with the communicative exchange between friends.⁴⁷

Honneth recognises that it is a difficult task to empirically demonstrate the existence of the central norms that constitute friendship. However, he suggests that the informal sanctions against attempts to instrumentalise and undermine friendship based on trust constitute a strong argument against those who claim that the institution of friendship is threatened.

A negative development of friendship would occur if tendencies toward individualisation and flexibility in the labour market forced individuals to adopt an increasingly instrumental relationship with their peers. This type of development would count as pathological because it would undermine trust, sympathy, and sincerity, norms that are constitutive of the institution of friendship. However, despite suggestions to the contrary, Honneth regards the institution of friendship, with its stabilising effect on human interaction, as one of the most important resources against the accelerating processes of individualisation and the pressure for increased flexibility.⁴⁸

46 *Ibid.*, p. 246.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

2.2 *The Economic Sphere of the Market*

The section of the economic sphere of the market is—as usual—divided into three parts.⁴⁹ First, prior to normative reconstruction proper, Honneth discusses the extent to which the capitalist market can be analysed as a relational sphere in which social freedom can be realised. This problem, which Honneth refers to as ‘the Adam Smith problem’, involves the question of whether the freedom that can be realised in the market sphere is a purely negative freedom of strategically oriented subjects or whether the market sphere should be understood as a sphere in which economic actors understand each other as “members of a cooperative community”.⁵⁰ I will not go into the details of this section, but Honneth relies on the work of Hegel and Émile Durkheim, as well as Karl Polanyi and Talcott Parsons to demonstrate a crucial premise: the market sphere is able to reproduce itself only if it can draw on a number of obligations that are not limited to what can be legally sanctioned.⁵¹ Thus, the market sphere is a sphere in which individuals can realise social freedom.

The second and third sections consist of a normative reconstruction of the individual’s potential for realising social freedom in the consumer sphere and the labour market.⁵² In this context, I must limit myself to considering Honneth’s normative reconstruction of the consumer market. Honneth begins with a demonstration of how individuals experienced a new type of individual freedom through consumption, first in England in the 18th Century and later in continental Europe. For the first time, it became possible for individuals to follow their will and to establish their identity through the consumption of goods. To Hegel, and for Honneth, the increased possibility for freedom has an ambivalent character. On the one hand, it can be understood as an important increase in freedom because the commodity market can be seen as an abstract medium of recognition: consumers realise that producers make it possible for them to satisfy their needs, whereas producers understand that they are dependent on consumers to buy their products. On the other hand, Hegel was aware of the “production of needs” through the market system, and Honneth demonstrates how this leads to the production of luxury goods that became “necessary” for consumers through refined commercial strategies in the period immediately after Hegel’s death.⁵³

49 The argument in this section is partly indebted to: Rutger Claassen, “Social Freedom and the Demands of Justice”, *op. cit.*

50 *Ibid.*, p. 349; Rutger Claassen, “Social Freedom and the Demands of Justice”, *op. cit.*

51 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 320.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 363–364.

Based on this ambivalence in the consumer sphere, Honneth demonstrates the history of the possibilities and limitations for realising social freedom in the consumer sphere.⁵⁴ For example, he refers to the consumer cooperatives that were established in the 1860s throughout Western Europe to contribute to the fair distribution of goods and to counteract the tendency towards price gouging. According to Honneth, such initiatives were established to remind producers to take consumers' interests into account and to allow the market to become a sphere in which social freedom could be realised:

The needs of the consumers should be coordinated against the businesses interests of income in an ethically unproblematic way. All the involved parties must understand the market as an institutionalised medium for exchange where both parties, consumer and producer, reciprocally contribute to the realisation of each other's interests.⁵⁵

To better understand the norms that can make social freedom possible in the consumer sphere, Honneth turns to the claims proposed by collective actors, such as social movements. These norms are articulated as claims that can reform the consumer market from within; that is, they identify ideals that constitute a well-functioning capitalist system and do not aim to overthrow the system as such.⁵⁶ Furthermore, these suggestions for correcting the consumer market remain stable from their early period (1850) throughout the 20th Century. Honneth identifies four core norms. First, not everything should be for sale; sexual services and alcohol are examples that various social movements have sought to remove from the market. Second, the price formation of key goods, such as food and housing, should not be decided by markets. Third, it is necessary to limit luxury consumption, an argument proposed by religious and ecological social movements. Fourth, the consumer market cannot be left to transactions between companies and individuals; collective actors such as cooperatives must be ensured a place in the system.⁵⁷

In addition to these substantial norms, the normative reconstruction also notes the possible learning potential for subjects engaged in discursive practices such as negotiations between consumers and producers. These practices allow actors to consider their opponent's perspective and to limit their own needs (*Bedürfnisse*).

54 *Ibid.*, p. 380.

55 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 384–385.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 382, 384.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 382–384; Claassen, "Social Freedom and the Demands of Justice", *op. cit.*

In his next step, Honneth provides a detailed historical narrative to demonstrate how these norms have been realised in different societies at different times. At some points, such as in Western Europe in the 1950s and the early 1960s, the critique of consumerism was almost invisible. This situation began to change with the election campaign of President John F. Kennedy, whose focus on consumer rights initiated impulses that were made into law in almost all European countries.⁵⁸ In such periods, it is possible to describe the development as a process by which ideals are approximated. Despite these periods of success, the overall assessment of the development of the consumer sphere is rather bleak. There is an unfulfilled potential in the practice of the consumer sphere; or, to put it more strongly, there are social pathologies (*Fehlentwicklungen*) within this sphere that have grave negative effects on society:

We have to admit, that the consumer sphere has not become a sphere for the realisation of democratic ethical life [*demokratischer Sittlichkeit*]. Even if it could have had such a normative potential, because it operates under discursive mechanisms and other corresponding regulations, it has not become a sphere where the actors reciprocally adopt the other parties' perspective. Neither has it become an arena for the restriction of needs. On the contrary: Despite massive moral condemnation of consumerism, it is the individual accumulation of short-lived goods which dominates.⁵⁹

This seems to be an important shift with regard to the object of normative reconstruction in the two spheres encountered so far. Focusing on friendship, Honneth explicates intuitive competencies regarding rules that govern interactions between friends. However, in normatively reconstructing the consumer sphere, the focus is primarily on well-founded claims proposed by different individual and collective actors in this sphere. I will address the problems this entails in the final section.

2.3 *The Sphere of Democratic Will-Formation*

In the final section on democratic will formation, Honneth treats the historical development of the public sphere and the constitutional state before closing with some comments on political culture. In this third sphere of social freedom, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* cannot be used as a point of departure

⁵⁸ Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, op. cit., p. 391.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

because Hegel is not concerned with democratic will formation.⁶⁰ Instead, the foundational documents are found in the works of Habermas and Durkheim, as well as John Dewey and others.

In the normative reconstruction of democratic will formation, Honneth outlines how a new principle of legitimacy emerged during the 19th Century. Based on and protected by a gradual development of individual rights, the public sphere emerged as a sphere in which citizens could develop political opinions based on the free exchange of reasons. Initially limited to property-owning men, the public sphere was—gradually and through intense battles—extended throughout the 20th Century to include a larger part of the population. Legitimate decision making was increasingly understood as dependent upon the communicative freedom of citizens and the ability of the political system to be receptive towards the arguments produced in the public sphere.

Thus, the public sphere constitutes a third sphere of social freedom because it provides citizens with the indirect possibility to participate in law-making procedures through an intersubjective exchange of reasons regarding the goals or the direction the community should take. As such, the public sphere is based on a principle of mutual recognition, where citizens must see each other as equally entitled to express opinions and reasons. This principle of mutual recognition introduces the citizenry to a completely different system of roles based on equality as opposed to the paternalistic and rank-based system of roles that had been dominant for centuries.⁶¹

However, although the idea of democratic will-formation based on equal rights was established as a new principle of legitimacy, it did not change the existing power structures. By the mid-1850s, we cannot speak of a well-functioning public sphere in Europe. The idea of political equality is not sufficiently anchored in political subjects, and the sufficient legal mechanisms are not institutionalised.⁶² In the 1920s and 1930s, this situation changed, and a relatively stable public-political sphere had been established in most of the European states with democratic constitutions.⁶³

In this new situation, two problems occurred, and these problems continue to challenge the democratic order of most European states today. First, prior to the First World War, some type of nationalism had been an important mechanism for social integration. The feeling of being part of a community or a

60 For Honneth's criticism of Hegel, see: *Ibid.*, p. 471; Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–80.

61 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 483–484.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 485.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 593.

homogeneous nation state was an important premise for the establishment of democratic procedures. Of course, the unity that existed in this period was made possible by the exclusion of a large part of the population. Participation in democratic will formation was reserved for the bourgeois elite. In the new types of mass-democracy that emerged after the war, the former unity was replaced by a polarised citizenry. In this situation, right-wing nationalism was established based on a rejection of the parliamentary, constitutional state. According to right-wing claims, these were institutional arrangements that were unable to secure national unity.⁶⁴

Second, in the period between the wars, the neutrality of the state was questioned with an intensity never before experienced. According to the normative self-understanding of the constitutional state, the laws that were intended to regulate the coexistence of citizens should be neutral between different conceptions of the good. Prior to the First World War, this neutrality had been questioned by members of minority groups, such as the Catholic minority in Germany. However, this debate remained on the outskirts of the public sphere. In the interwar period, the left questioned the class-basis of the state, not only in Germany but also in Great Britain and France. The left articulated the old Marxist theme that claimed that the constitutional state was an instrument to enforce the interests of the capitalist class.⁶⁵ The theme was not new, but with the establishment of a broad public sphere, this debate was able to engage the entire population for the first time.

Honneth claims that these two “problems” can explain the fall of the constitutional state that occurred in many European countries in the latter part of the interwar period:

The pressure of social conflicts based on the class-character of state policy lead to a double radicalisation: On the one hand, a nationalistic ideology—which no longer played an integrative role—developed in the hands of an elite that was increasingly questioned. On the other hand, the labour movement developed a deep-seated scepticism towards the neutrality of the democratic constitutional state. Both developments were not only dependent, but also contributed to the intensification of the other.⁶⁶

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 593–594.

65 *Ibid.*, pp. 596–597.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 597.

The particular twist Honneth gives to this rather conventional analysis is to demonstrate how these two problems continue to haunt the order of constitutional democracy. He follows the two problems into the current EU debate and concludes that the tensions they create remain unresolved. The political integration of the community is left to each nation state because of the lack of a European public sphere, and the lack of a common social state (*Sozialstaat*) makes it impossible for each state to regulate the markets sufficiently.

At this point, both the tensions reconstructed over the past eighty to ninety years can be discerned: The democratic constitutional state involves two tensions, which are bound together like in a vicious circle: Its tension with nationalism on the one hand, and with the capitalist economy on the other hand. The more the political integration of the European community continues to be left to the democratic will-formation of the nation-state, the more the transnationalisation of the civil rights of the citizenry must be limited to the liberal rights of freedom, thus resisting a collective effort to regain control of the markets.⁶⁷

3 Honneth vs. Habermas

My immediate reaction after finishing Honneth's book was, What's new? In this final section, therefore, I shall attempt to answer that question by discussing Honneth's normative reconstruction against Habermas' approach.

The distinctness of Honneth's approach is perhaps best understood as the constant shifting of perspectives between the ideal and the real. He presents a historical narrative shot through with the ambivalence of modernity. As we have seen, Habermas is concerned with the tension between the "normative self-understanding of the constitutional state, as explained in discourse theoretical terms, and the social facticity of the political processes that run their course along more or less institutional lines".⁶⁸ If my understanding of Honneth is correct, his goal is to pay more attention to the social facticity or to the institutionalisation of the political process. This is achieved through the historical narrative that moves back and forth between the constitutive ideals operating in the different spheres and the institutionalisation of these ideals.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 611 Honneth employs the term 'liberalen freiheitsrechten'. I take him to mean negative liberties.

68 Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

Using Habermas as his reference with regard to the methodological approach, Honneth utilises reconstruction as a reading strategy. The constant shift between the ideal and the real, between the “normative self-understanding and the facticity of the political process”, is seen as a strategy that is implicit but not sufficiently realised in Habermas’ (later) works. Allow me to elaborate. In the section on the public sphere, Honneth employs *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* as a foundational document. This book is described as a historical reconstruction that focuses on both ideas and social practices.⁶⁹ In *Faktizität und Geltung*, the contrast between the ideal and facticity is less prominent. It remains implicit, as if Habermas has “gambled away” his original insights. Thus, by drawing on *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, Honneth employs Habermas against Habermas to criticise Habermas’ later work. According to Honneth’s immanent critique, *Faktizität und Geltung* is too focused on the explication of the normative self-understanding of citizens in modern constitutional democracies.

Another important difference that suggests an answer to ‘the what’s new’-question is the emphasis Honneth gives to genealogical critique as a resource that must be integrated into the reconstructive approach. The theoretical justification for this move can be found in Honneth’s earlier work. In *Rekonstruktive Gesellschaftskritik unter Genealogischem Vorbehalt*, Honneth supplements the reconstructive critique with genealogical critique: “By this, I mean the attempt to criticise a social order by demonstrating historically the extent to which its defining ideas and norms already serve to legitimate a disciplinary or repressive practice”.⁷⁰ Thus, to Honneth, a genealogical critique must be integrated into the reconstructive framework because the ideals that operate in social practices change, and without such a genealogical test, we cannot “be sure that the ideals it adduces still possess in social practice the normative meaning that originally distinguished them”.⁷¹ As we have seen, this element is most prominent in Honneth’s reconstruction of the norms implicit in relationships between friends.

Perhaps the most innovative—and problematic—aspect of Honneth’s approach is the claim that the social freedom that can be realised in the sphere of democratic will formation is dependent on pre-political experiences in the other two spheres. On the one hand, Honneth provides good arguments for this thesis. He demonstrates how the modern form of friendship, based on trust

69 Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and Paul Sörensen, “Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit”, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

70 Axel Honneth, “Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso”, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

and sincerity, enables subjects to experience a discursive process that constitutes a fundamental resource for democratic will formation. On this basis, the criticism levelled at Habermas in Honneth's earlier writings is strengthened:

The idea of the democratic public sphere exists on the basis of social pre-suppositions that can be secured only outside the idea itself; it must expect each citizen to share so much common ground with all others that an interest in involving oneself actively in political affairs can emerge at all. However, this much common ground can evolve only where individuals have been able to experience communicative relatedness in the pre-political domain.⁷²

However, on the other hand, the normative reconstruction of the consumer sphere points towards problems of identifying norms that constitute social freedom in the economic sphere of the market. In section 2.1 Honneth identified constitutive rules for true friendship through a careful demonstration of how subjects intuitively regard norms such as trust, sympathy, and sincerity as necessary conditions for the modern form of friendship. In section 2.2, no reference is made to how subjects intuitively master rules. Instead, attention is shifted, and focus is directed at claims proposed by collective actors.

This is a problematic strategy. It invites a number of questions, but I can address only two central concerns. First, the former strategy of identifying implicit competencies reconstructs ideals that already operate in the given practice. This type of reconstruction focuses on necessary competencies that are constitutive of friendship and provides a strong basis for grounded criticism. By identifying implicit ideals from a given practice, these ideals already have a normative hold on the addressees and can effectively initiate change. The latter strategy, which takes claims proposed by actors as its point of departure, cannot claim to reconstruct ideals already institutionalised in the practice itself. Claims articulated by social movements must be given additional justification to demonstrate the constitutive character of the ideals they articulate. Honneth has not provided sufficient arguments to support the contention that the ideals he reconstructs from the market sphere are constitutive of this practice.

72 Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today", *op. cit.*, p. 235.

Against this criticism, Honneth could say that the demands proposed by various social movements indirectly suggest that the ideal has already been established in a given practice. In an attempt to clarify his own position, Honneth defines internal critique as based upon the idea that “certain normative ideas and principles are already institutionalised, which means that they are not only accepted but that they are somewhat already informing our practices”.⁷³ The important terms here are, of course, ‘institutionalised’ and ‘informing our practices’. An ideal is not institutionalised simply by being articulated as a claim by a social movement, and the fact that it is articulated as a claim by a social movement does not provide evidence that the ideal informs our practices.

A related objection concerns the criteria employed to identify ‘well-founded claims’. How can we distinguish between progressive claims articulated by, for example, social movements operating in the market sphere? At this point, the contrast with Habermas is particularly clear. Habermas focuses on *formal* aspects of discursive practices, and he reconstructs pragmatic presuppositions necessary to understand a given practice. By referring to ‘well-founded claims’ as the material from which we can normatively reconstruct constitutive ideals, Honneth must have access to *substantial* criteria to assess and evaluate various claims. It is difficult to see how such substantial criteria can be established within Honneth’s conceptual framework.

73 Gonçalo Marcelo, “Recognition and Critical Theory Today: An Interview with Axel Honneth”, in *Philosophy Social Criticism*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2012, pp. 209–221.

Freedom, Solidarity, and Democracy

An Interview with Axel Honneth

Morten Raffnsøe-Møller

The point of departure of this interview is Axel Honneth's latest *magnum opus*, namely *Das Recht der Freiheit*.¹ This book is an ambitious attempt to establish a new theory of justice on the basis of a whole new interpretation of the social infrastructure of individual freedom (or what Honneth calls 'social' freedom). However, the interview also traces the development of themes and concepts in Honneth's *oeuvre* since *The Struggle for Recognition* from 1992.

The interview is divided into three main sections. In the first section Honneth defends the fundamental idea that individual freedom has become the criterion for social justice and legitimacy in all central modern practices and institutions. The second section is concerned with Honneth's delineation of three spheres of social freedom, that is, personal relationships, market society, and the self-determining democratic public. The last section deals with Honneth's hopes and concerns for the future of democracy and solidarity.

1 Freedom as Normative Foundation of Modern Society

1.1 *Competing Models of Society*

MRM: In *Das Recht der Freiheit*, which was published in German in 2011, you attempt to legitimise and criticise the central institutions of our society taking-up from the outset the concept of individual freedom. This monistic approach could give rise to several concerns, some of which I would like to be the theme in the first part of our conversation. Another set of questions concerns how the different treatises in your *oeuvre* that thematise freedom and recognition fit together—if, indeed, they do fit together at all. Well, for

* This interview was conducted in Frankfurt in January and November 2012. Additionally, a number of follow-up issues were discussed by telephone in May 2013.

1 Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin Suhrkamp, 2011. For the English version see: Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014.

a start, the first worry would be: Why exactly is 'freedom' the foundation of modern society? One could, it seems to me, challenge this model in three ways, or with three foundational alternatives: a monistic, a cynical, and a pluralist. The monistic alternative would propose a different value from which to reconstruct the modern order, say, 'justice' or 'solidarity'. The cynical would be a Nietzschean point of view and would argue that the whole modern order is basically better explained through motives of power, security, or fear. The third would be a pluralist position similar to Charles Taylor's, which argues that we need a plurality of values, such as freedom, but also equality, wellbeing, etc., in order to reconstruct a much more complex picture of the norms of modern society.

AH: Difficult question . . . Maybe it is best if I go through the alternatives one at a time? As a matter of fact, the question of whether it is possible to interpret the modern world from one value, or from values at all, has been a core puzzle for generations of philosophers and social scientists. Typically, one must say that the answer has been monistic. Hegel, Durkheim, Parsons, and I would add, Habermas all interpret modernity, maybe not from this value, for they do not all ascribe to the concept of 'value', but they interpret it from the idea of individual freedom. Most clearly, of course, Hegel says that it is the fundamental principle of modernity. First of all, I simply follow this interpretation. However, I attempt to substantiate the claim more strongly, in that I try to show how the essential institutions of our society can only be understood in their constitutive rules through the idea of freedom. There are hardly any institutions of significance in our society, in which the constitutive rules cannot in some way be interpreted as freedom promoting or freedom realising. Thus, there is a strong case for assigning freedom this central role. Concerning the idea of justice: I don't consider justice to be a value that is pursued for its own sake. Rather, justice can only be understood through its connection with another value, it cannot be a superior value of a society. I think that all societies operate under the idea of justice. There is hardly any society that does not operate under the demand to establish a just order, and a demand that must—one way or another—be legitimated towards all participating members. Understood in this manner, justice is not a value specific to modern societies. I think that the societies of antiquity, of the middle ages, yes, also the so called archaic societies, existed and were subject to demands and norms of social justice. This, I would claim, also holds regarding the demands of solidarity. Consequently, I do not think that justice or solidarity can be the superior values of modern societies, because, they are—how am I to put it—legitimizing foundations and principles of any society.

MRM: ...to differentiate modern societies, so to speak, we must invoke freedom...

AH: ... yes, one must introduce another value!

AH: The cynical position has, I think, the enormous downside that one cannot even reconstruct the meaning of our practices hermeneutically. Because the meaning of our practices is simply the realisation of our freedom. It doesn't make any sense, it is simply absurd to claim that the meaning of our social practices can be explained through the perspective of power. If one puts oneself in the position of the actors populating our social practices and their understanding of our institutions, it is obvious that they are not primarily motivated, nor legitimised by power. Rather, if one understands power as influence or the ability to limit the actions of others, I would insist, that this is based on the internal interpretations of the actor's freedom [*Sinnverstehen*], and can only be a secondary phenomenon.

MRM: OK.

AH: The challenge of pluralism, i.e., of Charles Taylor, is of course more difficult. Here, I would claim that all the other values, the importance of which I definitely would not dispute, in the last instance, owe their meaning to how they relate to the concept of freedom. This definitely deserves a longer debate ... Yes, I think the other values we celebrate are either articulations of freedom or elements that contribute to freedom. That is, we understand them as contributing to freedom. Take for instance the idea of a cultural community as a value—this is possibly Taylor's position. I can only understand the value of this cultural community through the relation it has to freedom [*die rückbeziehung auf Freiheit*]. This is because we are free in a specific way in cultural communities, because we may understand ourselves as interacting freely in a certain sense. This is why we value cultural communities, which thus implies that: Cultural community is a contributive value to the idea of freedom.

MRM: OK, that makes a lot of sense and your answer makes an excellent bridge to another set of issues. These would be: Is freedom a sufficiently clear concept, and is the normative structure of freedom sufficiently clear to provide a normative basis of our society? Just to give an example: In the beginning of *Das Recht der Freiheit* you talk of individual autonomy as a basis, but you also speak of 'social freedom', that is, of a very specific form of freedom as a

basis. Furthermore, one could thus cite the idea of individual self-realisation, i.e., the foundation of your critical theory of society in *The Struggle for Recognition*, as yet another example of freedom as a normative basis for our social institutions...

AH: Yes, in that respect, I develop my position pluralistically in the sense that my first step is to investigate our conceptual history with the aim of understanding the different meanings of individual freedom in the modern world. I furthermore try to open up a spectrum spanning negative freedom as it is found in Hobbes, over reflexive freedom as it is articulated in Kant and the concept of self-realisation in Herder, concluding with the concept of social freedom. All are structurally different features [*Gestalten*], that is, different shapes of individual freedom, and they constitute an irreducible plurality of freedom, thus becoming a condition of modernity. Indeed, this cannot be dissolved: all these freedoms obviously have a value in themselves and participate in the meta-value of individual freedom. Yes, they are expressions of this value. Indeed, the perhaps radical and risky hypothesis is that all these different manifestations [*Gestalten*] of individual freedom have been realised institutionally, i.e., have gotten a foot hold in modern institutions. Of course a bit risky to claim that...

MRM: Yes, but interesting...

AH: Well, anyway, that is the claim. That means that negative freedom has come into its own [*zu ihrem Recht gekommen*] in the institution of legal right [*formalen Recht*]. Reflexive freedom has come into its own in the institution of morality, that is, a cultural institution, and the social freedoms have acquired their rights in several institutions, foremost in the three that I attempt to identify as: personal relationships, the market, and democratic will formation. However, there is much in that, that one could criticise...

MRM: That wouldn't be my interest. Maybe one could say that the advantage of such a pluralistic idea would be that one could see and understand freedom as a complex concept with internal tensions; for instance, it is possible to see moral freedom as one that struggles against certain substantial forms of social freedom etc., And that seems to me to be a huge advantage, and might also be the response to the pluralists, really...

AH: Exactly, exactly...

MRM: Yes, so in this case one would counter Taylor or perhaps Walzer by saying: 'Very well, but you aren't sufficiently systematic in your reconstruction [of the modern value system]'.

MRM: OK, a third worry would concern the generality and perhaps even the universality of your concept of freedom. Your socially embodied [*positivierten*] concept of social freedom would be controversial to many, I think. This line of argument is not the core issue here, but your primary inspiration, Hegel, is very explicit about modern freedom as something that grows out of the secularisation of Christian religion and as an articulation of world spirit. This is probably no option for you, or ...?

AH: (*laughing*) No, I will spare you the world spirit. That is a really difficult question. Essentially, this is the question of whether I have anything meaningful to say about why the value that I take to be constitutive of modernity, namely individual freedom, is superior to prior values. Not only how we may understand the development of this value—that is part of the question—but also whether we may understand this process as an actual progress. And of course, I do not claim to have done this, hence provide a genealogy of the development of this value. There are, I think, probably very different processes that contribute to the formation of the different concepts of individual freedom, thus the singular facets of individual freedom. The three concepts [negative, reflexive, and social freedom] have, I think, each their own history: One that reaches far back and another that is relatively recent. Negative freedom is, I think, quite new, while social freedom is much older. The history of reflexive freedom goes back to Aristotle, that is, they all have different histories and varying temporalities. The crucial question is: Can you say something meaningful about why this value should be superior to other values, so that it can provide a solid underpinning of a normative analysis. And the argument, which I haven't worked out properly, but which seems reasonable [*sinnvoll*] to me—and that I also found yesterday in Durkheim's book on education—is that the conditions of our normative craving for justification is ultimately articulated in the value of freedom. If we understand all societies as internally, legitimising, social orders [*sich legitimierender sozialer Ordnungen*], this means that societies are dependent on [*hingewiesen auf*] legitimisation, because man is a normatively questioning being, a justification-craving being. One could then say that all social orders are justificatory orders—as Boltanski puts it—and that the medium of justification is itself articulated in the idea of freedom, that is, justification demands unforced, individual insight, and articulation. In this case one could say that this value is superior to all others, because the substance of

justification is articulated in this value. . . . Yes, as a process that catches up with itself [*Selbsteinhohlungsprozess*]. And thus I would understand it very much in a Hegelian spirit . . .

MRM: Yes, from substance to subject, right . . . ?

AH: Yes, exactly. For Hegel, freedom is, of course, the institutionalisation of the principle of spirit, that is, freedom is spirit that comes into its own. Thus, one would say that the substance—the social order that justifies itself—here gets to [understand; articulate] the idea, the value. This idea needs much more development than I have done. In fact, while I have only done this over one page of the book, I would conceive of the justification along those lines.

MRM: And thus the theoretical/conceptual and political struggles over the normative foundations of society would then be conceived as struggles over the meaning of freedom . . .

AH: Exactly. The whole of history has, since the establishment of this value, and especially since the institutionalisation of the different facets of freedom in our different institutions, been the history of struggles of interpretations, one could say. Struggles between different parties over: how are we to understand freedom appropriately?

1.2 *Continuity and Change in the Concept of Freedom*

MRM: OK. The second main topic concerns continuity and discontinuity between your earlier works and *Das Recht der Freiheit* in regard to your interpretation of central concepts of recognition and freedom. I have some specific question concerning this, but initially it is maybe most appropriate to ask you quite plainly, whether you, in the process of writing *Das Recht der Freiheit*, were aware of clear ruptures in your understanding of recognition and freedom when compared to, say, *The Struggle for Recognition* or *Suffering from Indeterminacy*, or one could even mention *Redistribution or Recognition*? Did you consciously change something or think differently when approaching the subjects or was it rather a continuous process?

AH: . . . yes, I would rather speak of it in terms of continuity. Well, not continuity. There are of course huge differences between *The Struggle for Recognition* and *Das Recht der Freiheit*, but the road I have travelled should rather be understood as a continuous process of corrections: corrections, generalisations, and amendments. Yes, one could euphemistically call it a learning process. Indeed,

I really didn't want to articulate or understand the differences with respect to *The Struggle for Recognition* while writing *Das Recht der Freiheit*. Rather, it was more implicit, so that now I experience myself as confronted with those questions.

MRM: ... and the differences are probably also much more obvious from the perspective of the reader, than from the internal perspective of the author?

AH: Yes, exactly right. I think that the reader that knows both these books, who read *The Struggle of Recognition* 20 years ago and now reads *Das Recht der Freiheit* will note: Quite a lot has changed. There are huge differences, although at the end of the day I don't think the changes are that big.

MRM: Well, probably not. Perhaps there is a lack of clarity about how one relates to the other, and maybe I could pinpoint two such obscurities. One is the idea, well, basically the foundational idea in *The Struggle for Recognition*, about how to develop a formal idea or even theory about the good life as a norm guiding the conception of a just society. Well, if that is the idea in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, then its presence is merely implicit. Rather, that book develops a concept of social freedom in different facets that are then normative foundations for spheres of society. One asks whether these spheres of freedom are really developed from the anthropological norm in *The Struggle for Recognition* behind our backs, so to speak, or whether there is—normatively speaking—really something quite new at work here?

AH: There is somehow something else at work, because I wouldn't speak of a formal theory of the good anymore, but rather of a historically informed concept of ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*]. That does make a considerable difference, I would think. And because our subject is modernity, it is a theory of modern ethical life; one could even say a formal theory of modern ethical life. At the end of the book I even make an attempt to articulate this a bit stronger, since I claim that all these spheres of freedom must mesh freely with each other [*zwanglos ineinandergreifen*] as democratised practices, to make a realisation of ethical life possible. Make possible 'the ethical universal', as Hegel would term it. In this sense it has some basis in a formal idea [namely the formal idea of 'the ethical universal']. But I do not ascribe to the idea that the realisation of all these dimensions of freedom would automatically enable the unhindered self-realisation of the individual. In this sense the idea of self-realisation has rather receded into the background.

MRM: Right.

AH: Of course, I retain the idea that this articulates the quintessence of the social good, when these dimensions are developed in the freest form. But this is somehow a more moderate issue, no formal theory of the good, but rather a theory of the societal good.

MRM: Could one venture that we then still need another theory, which is, developed from the stand point of the idea of the individual good life?

AH: Yes, probably. Whether one can indeed develop such a theory is another question. But at least one can say that we need supplementary elements if we are to conceptualise the conditions of self-realisation. Probably more elements than we have discussed here. Maybe the best characterisation of the book is that it is in the end clearly a theory of the societal good in contrast to a theory of the individual good. That was already a definite ambivalence in the early book, which I have now resolved in favour of a theory of the social good.

1.3 *Freedom and Equality*

MRM: And the claim that your theory is of the social good is in a certain sense a hint to my next question, namely how and to what extent your theory is also to be understood as an egalitarian theory. I mean, in *The Struggle for Recognition* it is quite clear that in the sphere of right, an extensive catalogue of rights are—also with your reference to Marshall—equally ascribed to all. You also state this in *Recognition or Redistribution*. The egalitarian pull is somehow not as clear in your new book...

AH: Well, I would say that it isn't articulated under the heading of 'equality'. The basic idea is that it would also be a Hegelian idea, I think—that individual freedom can only be understood as a universal value in the modern world. Thus from the very beginning, the idea is that everyone deserves freedom and anyone can claim *Das Recht der Freiheit*. It is not an exclusive principle, as was the case in antiquity; rather the modern concept of individual freedom is from the beginning radically general and universal. This means, with respect to equality, something different relative to each sphere. On the other hand, it means that in all, sufficiently developed, spheres, all individuals should be equally free. In my mind this means that equality is not an independent value, but rather the form of implementation of the universal idea of freedom, that is, it changes from a primary value to the form under which individual freedom is realised, because it is understood as a universal value.

MRM: So, social freedom would have to be formulated relative to the institutions, so to speak. For instance, in the family it would be to have certain forms of interaction . . .

AH: Social freedom would mean something else in the family, than in the market sphere, or in the political sphere. The concept of equality changes with the relevant spheres of freedom.

2 Three Spheres of Freedom

MRM: Again this seems to be a perfect cue into our next topic, namely your claim that modern freedom is essentially distributed in three spheres each with their internal goods. According to your theory there are three indispensable kinds of good in modern society, each containing a value in itself, namely personal relations and the family, market society, and democratic politics.

2.1 *Personal Relations and the Family*

MRM: In *Das Recht der Freiheit* you characterise the sphere of personal relations as a wide range of personal relations, from friendship to love. Moreover, that these relations during the last two centuries have been understood as the social context for the realisation of a specific kind of freedom that is especially hard to define. Your analysis is for obvious reasons retrospective, because your aim is rational reconstruction. But in my questions, I would like to focus on the prospective aspects of this sphere of intimacy. Perhaps we could agree that personal relationships always have both a socio-cultural and a personal or subjective component. The first can be understood as the general conditions for friendship and love provided by society, whereas the second concerns the personal goals and attitudes that individual agents bring to these institutions. I would like you to consider both sides of this equation. First: How would you characterise the current social conditions for realising personal life and its internal goods? This could be articulated in contradistinction to how they have been, but also in the light of how they may develop.

AH: The answer is of course partially dependent upon what one takes these conditions to be and how one interprets their totality. I would like to distinguish socio-economic conditions—which was probably what you were aiming at—from cultural and moral conditions that determine what is thinkable and desirable in such relations. The socio-economical conditions have experienced a steady and gradual improvement over the last two hundred years,

which of course is prompted by the general trend towards the betterment of the economic and social conditions of the individual: The differences of class have, if not been obliterated, then at least partially broken down. Women have seen their economic freedom radically improved during the last decades. So, in the socio-economic sphere we have witnessed certainly not sufficient, but still quite massive improvements. Also, as with regard to cultural conditions, we have seen considerable improvements, as many taboos and implicit normative barriers for personal practices have been broken down. Friendships between men and women were until recently almost unthinkable, as were homosexual relations. This means that all the types of personal relationship that I differentiate—friendships, intimate relationships, and families—have experienced progress, whereas on the other hand, I tend to think that progress in relation to the family hasn't gone far enough. The family is still considerably handicapped through conditions on the labour market, the conditions of labour, and also through socio-economic barriers. So the answer to the first part of your question is a mixed one. Alas, in the meantime I forgot the second half of the question...

MRM: (*laughing*) It seems that you rephrased my question so that what I coined a 'subjective' component of the personal relationships was understood as relative to the cultural repertoire of what is acceptable and allowed in a specific culture. This is of course an important condition for what is subjectively pursued and accepted.

AH: Yes, and I would add, as you already implied, that my approach does not take its departure from 'subjective' interpretations of family life or friendship. The test goes the other way around, namely I start out from the assertion that there is—as Durkheim would have put it—'the moral fact' of existing friendships in society, that friendships are characterised by specific practices in which we participate, and that these practices are indeed very widespread. Now, there are of course, divergences and reinterpretations in these practices over time, but I basically tend to make the objective-normative repertoire of our practice my point of departure. From there I investigate the development of these institutionalised practices. In that respect you are right.

MRM: To get back to the prospective part of my question: Would it be fruitful to view this in the two dimensions that we already discussed? So one could see the last decades as a socio-economic hardening of conditions for the family in the sense that the heightened pressure on the labour market by capitalist competition, by higher geographical global mobility and due to higher

demands for flexibility of the employee, whereas the cultural-moral development has been more progressive by the pluralised models of the family and also of the forms of love?

AH: Right.

MRM: In *Das Recht der Freiheit* you are highly critical towards the liberal understanding of the family as solely a private matter. This prompts the question: what political consequences or initiatives would be necessary to promote further progress?

AH: Again, referring to what you already said: I think the basic problem of liberalism is the lack of attention towards the fact that families not only mirror societal justice, but that they already have inherent aspects of social justice as part of their practice: Elements of what we—following Dewey and Durkheim—might understand as social democracy. Only to understand the family as a contingent element seems to me to be extremely problematic. Yes, in fact, if we speak of ‘social justice’ as democratic conditions or even as conditions of possibility of democracy, we need to realise that the family is an enormously important element [*Widerpart*] in the totality of social democracy. If everything goes the right way, and the family is an emancipated one, i.e., is sufficiently developed, then attitudes and practices of democracy are developed there. These are then further practiced and developed in other higher forms and in other spheres. In this way the family is a constitutive element, a moment in democratic ethical life [*demokratische Sittlichkeit*].

MRM: One of the ‘ethical powers’ . . .

AH: Yes, of course, one of the big—Hegel would say one of the highest—powers of ethical formation [*Bildungskräfte*] of all that makes up modern democracy and modern ethical life. And indeed, it seems to me, conversely to many pessimistic diagnoses, that socio-cultural circumstances for the family have indeed improved. The father is now, from very early in child development, much more present in upbringing. This may not be realised, but the normative pressure on men to be present as fathers has grown enormously. Correspondingly, the equality between the sexes has grown enormously, so that the pressure of legitimacy has almost made those men that try to avoid it seem increasingly anachronistic individuals in moral terms. Furthermore, children are increasingly included as discursive partners in the family. The authoritarian father 50 or 100 years hence is only visible in peripheral areas of our society, not as

a one of society's central institutions, as it was the case before. In all these aspects of socio-cultural democratisation and development of a democratic ethical life, the family has improved considerably as an institution, while at the same time facing massive socio-economical structural challenges. The massive pressure for mobility and flexibility that you already mentioned challenges and to a large extent undermines the practices of freedom and democratisation. One might even talk of an invasion of work onto the family, where mothers and fathers are forced to meet such demanding and fatiguing work conditions that they are forced to bring them into the private sphere, and thus lose the ability to fully benefit from the cultural and moral progress of the last 50 years. In this sense we are in a rather paradoxical situation, in that the last 50 years' cultural development in the family has by far surpassed and indeed stands in stark contrast to what the socio-economic conditions currently allow for.

2.2 *The Market*

MRM: OK. The paradoxical situation of the family may be a cue for introducing our next subject. For, as with the arena of personal relationships, your description of the sphere of market induced economic activity is also characterised by paradoxical statements. Let me briefly mention two paradoxical statements about the market in your book. You call attention to the fact that many relations and roles in the current market and in the capitalist economy are characterised by alienation and are comparable to feudal society. This, by the way, resonates with your Frankfurt-colleague, Sighard Neckell, who claims that we are witnessing the rise of a new 'market-feudalism'. On the other hand, you state that the market has been a sphere of social freedom since its very beginning. This is so, because it promises all the participants' satisfaction of material needs, yes, even of the generalised needs, through work, exchange, and consumption. One wonders: Can both be true? And: After two or three centuries of not redeeming this promise, must we not simply give up on it? A rather polemical question!

AH: Of course. I think that depends very much upon how one interprets the phase of institutionalisation of the capitalist market. And I think it would be fatal to do so as if the market hasn't changed fundamentally during the last two centuries. Indeed, some of my Marxist colleagues tend to interpret it in this manner. This means that the actual state of the market, which is quite miserable, because it has transgressed all borders, is driven by its own forces and hardly bound by state regulation. This state of affairs is projected back on the last two hundred years development, and is then interpreted as

a development ruled by one single law [that of the accumulation of capital]. And this seems to me, to be historically and factually quite wrong and politically fatal, because one thereby relinquishes all chances of using strong—and immanent—arguments for the betterment of the market. The events surrounding the market have, since 1800, been in a permanent struggle between all participants: Between the owners of capital, the huge masses of workers, later also employees, between state agencies, between associations and unions that struggled within the market sphere to improve conditions. And if one reconstructs this history, then the first impression is that it is a history of many, many improvements, and not only of socio-political measures that should prevent the worst for the working population, i.e., a certain economical security, not only the establishment of improved employee codetermination in the specific company or sector, but also in the way of establishment of strong unions. All these factors establish—this is indeed my overarching idea—a general communitarisation [*Vergemeinschaftung*] of the market, hence a communitarisation in which we typically encounter a heap of collective actors on the market that of course haven't abandoned the specific interest perspective, but who have learned to interpret and communicate them under consideration of the interest of all other parties. At the moment, and this means during the last 20–25 years, we have experienced a massive relapse. Indeed, all that is called the neoliberal economy is of course a gradual and then rapidly accelerated deregulation of the market and a rolling back of the progress that had been attained. Yes, an undermining of the power of the labour unions, a rolling back of co-participation of employees, a radical flexibilisation, an undermining of employee status and rights. All of this is an enormous backlash, but a backlash that must be described and explained as such, if we are to fight it in a relevant way. In this respect, I somehow attempt to stick to the tendency [of communitarisation] that I have worked out as governing the last two centuries' development, and somehow say to myself, that the reversals that we have experienced must be dealt with, before we can bring the communitarisation of the market further ahead. At the moment, we stand with our backs against the wall in the fight against market forces. All agree in this regard, but it seems to be the wrong implication, to see the market as always being the same system embodying the same forces, over which we have no control, and then hoping for big revolutionary changes from without. It seems to me neither realistic, nor very helpful, nor politically meaningful.

MRM: Interesting. It seems that you refer to the market as a system of interaction between different collective actors that also bind and tie each other in a reciprocal struggle. That thought resonates with *The Struggle for Recognition*.

I wonder whether one still has to stick to two perspectives on the market to make this normative analysis convincing. On the one hand, we could understand the market as a struggle between specific actors with their interests. And on the other hand, we could understand the market as a system governed by a certain set of rules, that are—however concretely determined—tied up with what is ‘sellable’, rather than from the social benefit or the general needs or interests of all, and that in this respect put the actors under pressure.

AH: Well, I wouldn’t—I think one shouldn’t really separate the two angles. Of course, the market dictates certain rules, it is a system of rules. A system of rules that organises the exchange of products with the aim of increasing one’s own gains. This system of rules has different parties involved. Earlier one spoke of capitalists and workers. This has changed dramatically, because we are no longer dealing with individual capitalists, but rather with huge corporations, shareholder companies, but also banks that play an enormous role. Thus, the system of rules is primarily populated with collective actors and agencies that interact strategically. I think the fundamental insight of an alternative economic theory is that the interest of the actors is never unambiguously predetermined. Rather, the interests of the actors are themselves objects of normative interpretations. If this is so, the market itself is a normative occurrence [*geschehen*]. Albert Hirschmann has drawn this conclusion quite dramatically; yes others too, Etzioni, and of course the classics like Durkheim. And now one must analyse the market as a system of rules by asking: How do the collective actors interpret the normative, pregiven rules? This means: How do they interpret their own interests? And there were times in which they interpreted their interests, that is, their utilitarian [*nutzenorientierten*] interests, in a socially much more open-minded fashion than they do today. This is how I would attempt to construct an analysis of this . . .

MRM: And in that line of thought one could then perhaps say that current deregulation promotes specific normative expectations, others than the more interrelated interests of earlier times . . .

AH: Yes, yes, exactly. You see, deregulation also means that the normative horizons in which the utilitarian interests were integrated have been torn apart, and that the utilitarian interests are increasingly defined in an egocentric fashion.

MRM: OK, that brings us to politics . . .

2.3 *Political Will-Formation*

MRM: Now, it seems to me that, in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, you are suggesting a new concept of politics in opposition to what is presupposed in mainstream contemporary theories of justice. In mainstream theories politics is understood as the just political ordering of the conditions of interaction between individuals and their interests, whereas you seem—at least implicitly—to develop a new concept of solidarity, or at least, so it seems to me. At any rate, you speak of fundamental principles of solidarity that guide market society that are mediated through discursive principles and legal reforms, and you also speak of forms of solidarity that are developed and learned in the family and in the sphere of personal relationships. Also, you speak of a third form of democratic solidarity that was rather built historically around the nation state or national identity, but was developed into a democratic, public sphere. It seems to me that you then claim that democratic politics must, to a larger or lesser degree, be constructed reflectively, but also in solidarity and ‘on top of’ the two other spheres to succeed. It is, however, not quite clear to me which type of democratic solidarity, would or could supplant the one based on national identity.

AH: This question is left somewhat open ended [in the book], in that—in the last paragraphs—I actually only speak of a European public sphere. This is preceded by an analysis, where I explain, how the democratic public sphere must be understood as the socially enacted freedom [*sozial praktizierten Freiheit*] of a citizenship that is forming its common opinion and will. There is widespread agreement that this public could not have been established on this scale without the nation state. Indeed, the nation state ensures, primarily in the second half of the 19th Century, that the democratic public can develop beyond very limited geographic boundaries and consequently rise as, indeed, a national public sphere, with all the ambivalences this holds. And these ambivalences are for the first time dramatically, even catastrophically revealed in the Dreyfuss affair, long before anti-Semitism took a significant hold as a major issue in the German public sphere in a massive eruption in the at the times established democratic public sphere, in which the anti-Semites gain the upper hand and attempt to exclude the Jews from the national public sphere. Since then the nationally defined public sphere carries its ambivalences and paradoxes with it that gets another catastrophic articulation in the ‘civilisational message’ of the Nazis, which fosters a wholly nationally defined public. In the last 20 to 40 years we have, of course witnessed the massive loss of sovereignty of the nation states and parallel frazzling [*Auffranzung*] of the national frame of the democratic public sphere. In many, many respects. So

that today the following question forces itself upon us: What can take its place? My fundamental insight is that something must take its place, for otherwise we do not have democracies any more. That is, democracies live from the vitality of the publics that are constitutive of their self-government. No publics, no democracies. Consequently, I pose the question: What is a post-national public? And this question is extremely hard to answer, because the conditions of the establishment of a public sphere, any public sphere, are so highly demanding. I attempt to reconstruct these in seven main demands for a functioning public. There must be an all-encompassing qualitative press that can initiate debate. It presupposes the inclusion of everybody in a culturally more or less egalitarian sphere, such as the non-exclusion of certain groups because of different language, educational level *etc.* There is no alternative to this. But now the question is, 'How'. I think that such a public must first of all be established and advanced in Europe as a public sphere for a community of not fully sovereign states. And we are very far from this. Our German population doesn't take part vividly in events in Spain, Ireland, or Norway, and the opposite is also the case. As long as this is so, we cannot speak of a European democratic public. Rather, in this situation all politically engaged must concentrate on the establishment thereof; on how we are able to do something ourselves *etc.* The first steps would probably be to develop a stronger consciousness in our media of a European dimension. Our news-programmes still primarily report National news; they should ideally be European news. Not even ARTE gets this right! Consequently, we are very far from the goal, and I think that the central task is the creation of a public in this post-national sense.

MRM: Actually, I would think that there are indeed also resources in your theory for the trans-nationalisation of the public sphere, in the sense that you speak of goods in the sphere of personal relationships and the market sphere that are more or less universally recognised in our normative expectations, and also of the corrosive effects of neoliberalism that are experienced more or less equally all over the European continent. And both could be seen as the material of an encompassing public sphere, both concretely shared common goods and fears that these goods are threatened.

AH: Yes, as a matter of fact at the end of the book, I actually attempt a performative turn in the sense of claiming that someone who reiterates these struggles in his mind, will understand that they were really transnational from the very beginning. For instance, it is interesting that the Paris Commune—just to take one historically significant example—was equally spontaneously and instantaneously perceived in Germany as in England or in Italy. This means that we

have a chain of events and of social struggles, which have a European dimension from the very beginning. Understood in this manner, a 'performative turn' means, that he who has made this development clear to himself, will understand that we were indeed always in the process of establishing a European public sphere, a process that at the present time, however, needs a much stronger reflexive awareness of the common articulation of goods and of the threats that these goods are subject to. To foster a common European public from this should actually be easy, because we have so much in common: A common history, common experiences of defeat and of retrenchments [*Einschränkungen*]. In this respect, the chances for a European public should be there.

3 Solidarity and Democracy

MRM: It seems that our hope for a reinvigoration the European democratic public depends very much upon which resources might be generated for European solidarity and the formation of a democratic common will. Allow me, therefore, to conclude the interview by exploring exactly the themes of solidarity and democracy as they are articulated in your theory.

3.1 *Forms and Institutions of Solidarity*

MRM: Now, it seems that the concept of solidarity plays several and indeed different roles in your social philosophy, both in and between your major works. Already in *The Struggle for Recognition* two different concepts of solidarity are articulated in the sphere of 'Wertschätzung'. One meaning of solidarity connects the recognitive act of solidarity to the individual's contribution to the social division of labour, and hence connects the activity of the individual to the socio-cultural goals of the community. On the other hand, the concept of solidarity is modified with respect to the modern fact of pluralism, in a way that valuates individual goals as 'good' with respect to aims and values that are deemed valuable, when considered as elements of individual life plans or life realisation. It seems to me that this articulates an internal opacity in the structure, and I am not sure whether it is solved or articulated later, for instance in *Das Recht der Freiheit*. How do you stand on this? Are you in agreement with this interpretation?

AH: That makes sense, although the whole question has been displaced in *Das Recht der Freiheit*. This is especially the case for the concept of solidarity. This is so because I currently take my departure from the view that our society is made up of a number of at least intended [*prätendiert*] even if not

fully realised collective 'We's'. And everywhere I write of these different forms of 'we' and the freedom of the 'we', in contra-distinction to the freedom of the individual, these different forms of 'We' are subject to solidarity; so that when I use the category today, I use it in a much more specific way, in that I speak of a diversification of solidarities, namely everywhere, where freedoms are realisable together as a form of co-existence and socially being-for-another.

MRM: ... as for instance a 'solidarity of the family'...

AH: Exactly...

MRM: This is of course part of the heritage—how would it look for the market sphere, where one would traditionally apply something like a model of struggle between classes?

AH: There my interpretation rests on a reconstruction of the 'foundational documents' of market society: that originally there was an alternative tradition that thought that the market related to a presupposed 'We', so that the market was understood as hedged through a presupposed shared solidarity. This of course means that the market, when from its very beginning it had been understood as a sphere of presupposed solidarity, was seen as a medium where all are subjected to constraints that are necessary and needed for the maintenance of this solidarity. Here, I follow Durkheim and his concept of organic solidarity very closely—indeed here Durkheim is my closest ally.

MRM: ... and that means that one can hold the parties of the labour-market—employers and employees—accountable to norms, which they may not even recognise themselves, but must be accountable to, if we are to understand the labour market as in some way an activity of solidarity?

AH: This of course presupposes a picture of the market that is rather controversial. Yes, even contrary to a tendency in the latest decades to understand the market as a medium for the realisation of individual gains. And against this I would defend the view the market needs to be analysed as a medium of coordination and cooperation. This again means that the market must be subjected to specific forms of restriction on competition and on profit maximisation.

MRM: Exactly, this really means that you are articulating the norms of a market society, rather than of capitalism, which is defined more or less as the right to unlimited accumulation? Could one put it in that way?

AH: Well, that is a word that I have not analysed at all, which of course is one of the book's deficiencies. One would have to further analyse the distinction between market society and capitalistic market and, indeed, I actually proceed by making my normative concept of market society the point of departure, thus reconstructing the development of capitalism as a dispute or struggle with market society. But what I don't do to a sufficient degree is to create conceptual clarity concerning the differences between a capitalist and a 'social' market.

MRM: Okay, that makes sense and would indeed be a very interesting subject for further analysis. A third question concerning solidarity-generating phenomena would be the suggestion that we have other solidarity generating phenomena, like for instance global solidarity or cultural solidarity, or solidarity generated by other forms of interaction or, in your words, social forms of freedom. Would this be a possibility for you, or do you see this as a view resting on overly idealistic premises?

AH: No, that would be my view, too. I suggest this in a number of places. I would see this as an object of normative reconstruction everywhere, where the reproduction and realisation of values and norms make it necessary for the participants to include strangers. From this urge to include others, there grows something like an anticipation of global solidarity. However, in a way it emerges from the internal logic of the practice of realising already existing norms. This view can, or so I think, be made plausible in relation to democracy: The norms of democratic inclusion from a certain, advanced level of their realisation, demand that the internal decisions, even decisions made within the nation-state, are made under inclusion of the hitherto excluded other. This is an internal perspective that neither means an idealising point of view, nor a perspective from nowhere, but rather reconstructs the process of realisation of the democratic ideal up to the point where the inclusion of the hitherto excluded others are included...

MRM: ... excluded but affected...

AH: Yes, show itself to be inevitable.

MRM: Okay, so this would be a 'logic of expansion', so to speak?

AH: Yes, exactly, and I already suggest this in a number of places. That is, in a number of places it becomes clear that the process must include other cultures and societies if it is to move forward at all.

MRM: Exactly, a form of reciprocity between cultures. Would the ecological crisis be an example of this, or is that something completely different...?

AH: Actually, that would be a good example, because resolving the ecological challenge makes it clear that this is not manageable within the nation-state. Thus the realisation of the democratic ideal makes it necessary to cooperate with other states and to surrender national sovereignty. So, under the challenge of being able to solve certain problems a mechanism that builds up transnational cooperation and integration.

MRM: Also, the specific Hegelian move in this would be that this demand of justice did not arise exclusively from an idea concerning the generalisation of norms, but should be thought of as arising from the extension of spheres of interaction and goods. That is interesting and makes it clear in what way the Hegelian approach can be understood as an alternative to the very popular Kantian model.

AH: Correct.

3.2 *Challenges for Democracy and the Welfare State*

MRM: OK, and this could be the cue for one or two questions on democracy. The first question concerns the themes of 'democratic ethical life' and cooperation that have become increasingly important features of your theory. The question now becomes what exactly is the substance of recognition for democratic ethical life [*die Anerkennungsmaterie für demokratische Sittlichkeit*]. In your previous theory this would more or less amount to the idea that struggle for recognition of new interests and values and forms of life would enter the democratic battle. However, it seems to me that in your later works, Dewey and the idea of democratic cooperation becomes increasingly important as a foundation of your model of social community. Is this true, and if so, what happens to the struggles for recognition, that are somehow...

AH: Well, when one takes a closer look at my normative reconstruction in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, the common thread [*rote Faden*] is struggle. I wanted to make this clear in the index of the German edition that struggles are the red thread [in the Index of *Das Recht der Freiheit* 'recognition' is one of the most extensive entries]. Because I want to show that all these social goods in the normative principles, that is, the goods of social freedom, are contested [*umkämpft sind*], and have incessantly provoked struggles over the better realisation of the normative idea ever since their institutionalisation. So, struggles in all spheres are the central mechanism of realisation.

MRM: I see . . .

AH: Indeed. In another text, I have even claimed—as a reply to critics—that social struggles over the realisation of normative matters [*normativen Gehalten*] have the role that the ‘logic of the notion’ [*Logik des Begriffs*] had for Hegel. So I ask myself: what effectively produces the unfolding [*entfaltung*] of spirit? In Hegel, spirit produces this by its own power that unfolds in social reality. For me social struggles take on this attribute of spirit, and ensure the embodiment of the normative content of social reality.

MRM: . . . to get this right: Would this mean that the phenomenon of democratic cooperation is rather a subsequent phenomenon? When you are recognised, then you become part of the cooperative club, so to speak?

AH: . . . well, the cooperation itself has the form of a social dispute about who is included in the common democratic will formation of a given community, a dispute over the question: Who is to be included? And: How are we to organise the process? This is itself a kind of dispute about the question of how we are to realise the democratic norm, the norm of inclusion in democratic will formation in the best possible way.

MRM: Exactly, and therefore it is probably also wrong to separate the two things, as I attempted, since they are equiprimordial in that interpretation.

AH: Exactly!

MRM: Another question concerning democracy, which may have a more specific origin in the so called Scandinavian welfare model: There seems to be two signs of crisis there, of which I would simply like to hear your analysis. We have in the Scandinavian welfare states—although this is a challenge for all societies with strong public educational institutions—institutions that are meant to further the welfare and social freedom of citizens in a very comprehensive way. Critical voices, however, object against such states, their institutions and their educational systems, on the grounds that they fail to respect or promote pluralism in a society that is increasingly multicultural and globalised. Could one raise equal worries concerning your model, which operates with two central institutions of citizen formation, namely the family and market society?

AH: Well, that is a problem that one should take very seriously. Of course, I would say that I operate through a normative conception of democratic

society and democratic ethical life. This normative model demands, in a certain sense, the acceptance of certain social goods. I don't think that this is in conflict with multiculturalism, in so far as one understands multiculturalism as a fact of specific modern societies. Here, the different cultures that co-exist within a national-state to a certain extent involve themselves in the social goods to be able to cooperate with each other. Let me put it another way: to the extent that the different cultures understand themselves as co-existing in a modern society, there exists a definite normative requirement [*Zwang*] to share the central ideas of social freedom with each other. This means that sooner or later an appropriate model of the family and of a socialised market has to be accepted. This means, that in this respect I acknowledge a normative force in modern societies that cannot be neglected.

MRM: And this would signify one consequence, would another consequence—as you yourself seemed to suggest earlier—be that one also needed a normative extension of the social goods themselves, in the following sense: If other cultures become part of our culture, and practice and articulate goods that ought to be recognised, then the horizon of goods would itself have to be pluralised?

AH: Yes, I definitely would not rule that out. What I just said refers to what in *Das Recht der Freiheit* is addressed as 'cardinal goods', that is, the goods of freedom, which can in a certain way only be doubted at the expense of neglecting modernity. I would definitely not doubt that we could have enrichment from supplementary goods of other kinds.

MRM: Yes, and that could for instance be an extension prompted by globalisation and multiculturalism.

AH: Correct, and here I consider the process to be open and infinitely mouldable.

MRM: ... and could one then say that societies, such as the Scandinavian that have a strong tendency towards social solidarity, are balancing on a knife's edge between formation and homogenisation? It seems that this is one of the points where a Hegelian theory would need to depart from Hegel?

AH: Yes, I am certain of that. I mean, I must proceed quite differently from Hegel, because one has to stress the dynamics and future openness of the institutional structures to a greater degree. This means taking into account that social freedoms can be interpreted further and more radically than we do

today. Of course other cultures will make their contribution to the reinterpretation of social freedom and maybe convey new notions of how we can realise social freedoms even better.

MRM: Wonderful that you took the time for this interview.

Index

- Accountability, moral 42
- Alienation 41, 73, 271
- Allardt, Erik 193–212
- Althusser, Louis 20
- American Dilemma, an*, (Gunnar Myrdal)
219–234
- Aristotle 73, 150, 172
- Asad, Talal 169, 173
- Autonomy (see also *Freedom*) 1, 2, 9, 12, 18,
25, 28, 39, 42, 43, 46, 63, 65, 76, 102, 103, 108,
109, 126, 138, 212, 173, 199, 238, 242, 243, 244,
262
- Böckenförde, Ernst-Wolfgang 21, 22
- Benhabib, Seyla 166, 189, 114
- Between Facts and Norms* (Jürgen Habermas)
4, 49, 242, 244, 256
- Blasphemy 169, 170, 172, 180, 192
- Bourdieu, Pierre 129, 145, 232
- Capitalism 59, 76, 80, 115, 124, 125, 129, 130,
131, 132, 133, 273, 277–278
- Cavell, Stanley 151
- Consumerism 252, 253
- Consumers 61
- Cartoon controversy, Danish 169–192
- Citizenship 14, 34–56, 63, 66, 67, 110, 115, 117,
118, 149, 150, 153, 160, 274,
education and 24–30
- Class 7, 75, 116, 122, 132, 269
- Communitarianism 6
- Conflict, social 102, 125, 132, 135, 147–168
(political) 169–192, 193–212, 281
- Critical theory
conceptions of 174–175, 234–236,
238–259
Fraser-Honneth debate and 186, 6–8
normative justification and 3–9, 34,
148–152, 185–187
- Democracy 2, 4, 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 41, 48, 94,
120, 121, 132, 145, 193, 219, 223, 224, 234, 240,
242, 243, 244, 246, 255, 256, 260–282
(Honneth on)
- disagreement and 147–168
- democratic citizenship 75
- democratic ethical life 103, 178, 238, 249,
253, 270, 271, 279, 281
- democratic public sphere 17–32
(and education) 109, 113, 258
- democratic struggles 158
- democratic solidarity 274, 276–279
- democratic virtues 116, 180, 187–189, 191
- post-democracy 152–155
- welfare state and 279–282
- will formation and 19, 38, 39, 40, 41, 102,
116, 117, 186, 238, 246, 253–256, 274–276,
218
- Denmark 3, 169, 183–184, 189, 191, 192, 211
- Dewey, John 2, 6, 7, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27,
29, 30, 31, 39, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 149, 151
- Dignity 8, 147–168
embodied 157, 158, 159, 161, 162, 163, 165,
166, 167, 168
- Discrimination 41, 58, 68, 190, 202, 207–209,
211, 219, 223, 225, 227, 229, 232, 233
- Disesteem 58, 63, 65, 66, 67, 69, 178–192
- Distributive justice 6, 11–12, 36, 37, 43,
57–78, 102, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 252
- Disrespect 8, 179–180, 187, 191, 247
- Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of
Critical Theory* (Axel Honneth) 2, 4, 6, 10,
57, 149, 150, 177, 179, 188, 190, 247
- Dufour, Dany-Robert 127, 128, 129–132, 137,
141–145
- Durkheim, Emile 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30,
59, 60, 63, 69, 71, 77, 78, 133, 214, 261, 270,
273, 278
- Ecological crisis 279
- Education 17–32, 33–56, 70, 75, 83, 96, 97,
99, 123, 128, 130, 264, 275, 280
- Emotions/emotional 3, 53, 82, 93, 114, 109,
118, 149, 159, 163, 177, 181
moral injury and 169–192
- Equality 4, 8, 11, 14, 33–56, 62, 64, 66, 67, 70,
157, 158, 161, 179, 186–188, 190, 242, 243, 254,
261, 267, 268, 270

- Existentialism/existential 148, 150–152, 155, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162
- Expressive humanism 122–123
- Finland 29, 77, 79–100, 211
- Foucault, Michel 129, 130, 145, 173
- Fraser, Nancy 6–8, 63, 66, 67, 181, 186
- Freedom 1–16, 17, 18, 19, 34, 35, 36, 38, 41, 42, 46, 57, 62, 63, 66, 67, 76, 112–113, 149, 154 (political) 157, 158, 161, 164, 260–282
Political liberalism versus Honneth 101–123
Hegelian critique of individual freedom 124–146
free speech 186–187
as ultimate value in modern societies 9, 213–218, 245–248
- Freedom's Right/Das Recht der Freiheit* (Axel Honneth) 1, 8–9, 31, 40, 46, 47, 51, 57, 101–123, 149, 150, 162, 186–187, 190, 197, 201, 213–236, 238–259, 260–282
- Freud, Sigmund 125, 127, 128
- Gutman, Amy 19, 49, 64
- Habermas, Jürgen 4, 6, 61, 62, 63, 105, 111, 116, 122, 168, 189, 191, 239–245, 256–259, Honneth and 256–259, 261
- Hegel, G.W.F. 3, 8, 9, 13, 15, 25, 27, 40, 57, 71–75, 106, 111, 116, 121, 122, 123 (absolute spirit) 124–146 (Hegelian critique of neoliberalism) 147, 149, 150, 152, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 195, 196, 214, 215, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 246, 247, 248, 251, 253, 254, 257, 214, 264–267, 270, 279, 280–281
- Heidegger, Martin 147, 149, 150, 151, 152, 155, 156, 158, 160, 161, 162, 163, 167
- Integrity 148, 150, 156, 158, 161, 166, 167
- In We, The*, (Axel Honneth) 1, 2, 101, 107, 103, 110, 183
- Imagination, political 79–100
- Income 57–78 (basic) 110
- Integration, social 60, 90, 91, 94, 96 (disintegration) 100, 105, 255
- Internet 31
- Islam 169–192
- Islamophobia 171, 183, 189
- Joas, Hans 123
- Kant, Immanuel 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 70, 106, 124, 125, 127, 128, 129, 238, 240, 263, 279
- Kymlicka, Will 36, 102, 111–115
- Labour (see also *work*) 59, 71, 77, 114, 120 division of 63, 68, 108
- Liberalism 10–14, 101–123, 124–146 (and neoliberalism) 270
- Lukàcs, Georg 151
- Mill, John Stuart 102, 111, 115
- Mahmood, Saba 170–192
- Marshall, Thomas H. 38, 267
- Maslow, Abraham, H. 66
- Market, the/capitalist economy, the 47, 81, 102, 103, 109, 113, 114, 117–122, 125, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 143, 186, 201, 216, 218, 221, 251–253, 255, 256
- Marketisation 82, 130, 260–263, 271–274
- Marx, Karl 37, 73, 127, 132, 271
- McIntyre, Alasdair 74
- Mead, Georg Herbert 177
- Miller, David 37, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 61, 62, 76, 67, 77
- Minorities 8, 14, 17, 19, 22, 77, 115, 195–196
- Misdevelopments (Fehlentwicklungen), social 14, 120, 217, 218, 225, 227, 229, 235
- Modernity, Western 10, 14, 18, 123, 214, 218
- Mouffe, Chantal 147, 152, 153, 152–155, 156, 157, 158, 162, 163, 165, 167
- Mortgage (market) 117–120
- Movements, social 60
- Multiculturalism 23, 31–32, 194, 281, 206, 211, 188, 191
- Myrdal, Gunnar 213–236
- Neo-liberalism 79, 124–146, 271, 275
- New Public Management 79, 146
- Norway 147, 148, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 188
- Norms 2, 4 (internalization of) 23, 33, 39, 53, 62, 66, 69, 86, 90, 91, 92, 94, 96, 102, 104, 106, 108, 120, 121, 125, 151, 153, 165, 167, 171, 187, 191, 197, 198, 239, 240, 245, 248, 249, 250, 252, 253
- Nussbaum, Martha 115, 151, 161, 162, 191

- Obama, Barack 183
- Pathologies, social 9, 14, 133, 138, 156, 217, 223, 226, 231, 235, 237, 253
- Pathologies of Individual Freedom, The* (Axel Honneth) 103, 138, 140, 237, 265
- Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory* (Axel Honneth) 33
- Pedagogy 19–24 (and political philosophy)
- Pettit, Phillip 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 65, 67
- PISA surveys 29
- Power 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 108, 125, 132, 143, 155, 158, 162, 167, 173, 190–192, 228, 261–262
- Political philosophy 10, 13, 111, 112
and education 17–32
- Postcolonialism 187
- Race 66, 213–236
- Rawls, John 2, 6, 9, 10–14, 23, 25, 42, 57, 69, 72, 73, 74, 102, 107, 110–113
- Recognition,
as care (see also *love*) 3, 58, 59, 61, 62, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 72, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 90, 149, 151, 160, 162, 177
as love 51, 52, 54, 59, 61, 81, 89, 90, 93, 95, 96, 97, 122, 148, 149, 151, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 166
as respect 3, 5, 11, 40, 42, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 71, 75, 76, 78, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 148, 149, 150, 151, 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 162, 165, 167, 177, 187, 201
as esteem 3, 4, 5, 7, 42, 51, 53, 53, 57–78, 80, 84, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 149, 150, 151, 159, 161, 162, 166, 177, 201, 202
categorical 196–197
culture and 36, 97, 98, 123, 169–192
ethnicity, and 43, 65, 66, 67, 198–212
generative-responsive 199
Hegel, and 136, 139
hermeneutical 203
instrumental 199–200
merit and 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 69, 74, 76, 181
moral injury and 169–192
multidimensional 200–203
pragmatic 204–205
processual 196
religion and 169–192
recognition order 91, 92
self-identity and 3, 95, 177–180, 193–212
self-realisation and 3–5, 8, 13, 14, 58, 63, 64, 69, 71, 72, 73, 77, 78, 101, 117, 118, 119, 180–181
strict 197–198
substantial
struggle for 5, 12, 38, 60, 66, 76, 148, 150, 158, 168, 176, 181–185, 190, 192, 193–212, 272, 279
- Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (Axel Honneth & Nancy Fraser) 1, 2, 6–8, 34, 47, 57, 65, 90, 127, 158, 159, 181, 186, 187, 194, 201, 207, 219, 265, 267
- Reification 1, 84
- Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Axel Honneth) 90, 91, 131
- Relations (personal/intimate) 53–54, 93, 97, 102, 103, 109, 113, 114, 117, 118, 120, 121, 186–187, 249–250, 268–271
- Religion 123, 169–192, 175
- Rights 27
(political) 38–40, 42, 44, 48, 51, 53, 55, 62, 65, 66, 67, 76, 92, 94, 96, 105, 109, 111, 112, 115, 120, 122, 123, 150, 156, 166, 224, 242
(in Habermas) 243, 244, 253, 254, 256, 263, 267, 272
- Republicanism 6, 37, 40, 41, 44, 67
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 18, 25, 45, 122
- Self-confidence 59, 159
- Self-esteem 42, 57, 58, 59, 66, 67, 69, 77, 78, 107, 114
- Self-respect 42, 45, 59
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich 18, 25
- Shame 66, 67, 68, 77, 78, 138
- Sittlichkeit/ethical life* 4, 6, 13, 75, 103, 121, 136, 139, 140, 145, 178, 214, 238, 247, 249, 253, 266, 270, 271, 279, 281
- Smith, Adam 81, 120
- Social work 79–100
- Socialisation 4, 21, 24, 102, 108, 109, 117, 118, 119, 123
- Sociality 79–100 (and anti-sociality)
- Solidarity 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 57–78, 80, 109, 113, 114, 170, 176, 187, 190–191, 201, 274, 276–279, 281

- Stigmatisation 58, 63, 65, 66, 68, 76, 77, 78, 187, 188, 192, 200, 206–207
- Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Jürgen Habermas) 122, 177–180, 183, 185, 190
- Struggle for Recognition, The* (Axel Honneth) 2–5, 8, 33, 39, 40, 42, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 60, 63, 69, 73, 101, 103, 148, 149, 150, 159, 177, 178, 180, 183, 185, 190, 201, 261–263, 265, 266, 267, 272, 276
- Suffering, social 6, 14, 137, 174, 178
from Indeterminacy 139
- Sweden 211, 213, 220, 221, 226
- Terrorism 147, 148, 163, 164, 167, 183, 188
- Theory of Communicative Action, The* (Jürgen Habermas) 239, 247
- Taylor, Charles 60, 63, 65, 67, 70, 73, 112, 122, 161, 162, 206, 261, 262
- Tocqueville, Alexis de 111
- Toleration/tolerance 23, 99, 158, 164, 165, 166
- USA, the 29, 117, 118, 120, 122, 213–236
- Values 23, 34, 55, 71, 74, 86, 96, 104, 108, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 125, 131, 132, 142, 144, 153, 154, 155, 158, 164, 165, 166, 167, 197, 198, 210, 261, 262, 264, 276, 278, 279
- Virtues (see also *democratic virtues*) 47, 48, 73, 94, 116, 172, 174, 180, 187–189, 191
- Waldron, Jeremy 180, 190
- Walzer, Michael 23, 36, 40, 44, 52, 108, 109
- Weber, Max 89, 222
- Welfare state, the 58, 60, 77, 124, 136, 243, 146, 279–281
 Scandinavian/Nordic models of 33–56, 57, 75, 80–100, 145, 280–281
 continental models of 33, 51
- Wellmer, Albrecht 111
- Winnicott, Donald 177
- Women 82, 269
 invisible work of 58, 65, 77
 women's movement 178
- Work 7, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 58, 59, 60, 62, 65, 67, 12, 97–100
 (social work) 108, 120, 131
 workers 48, 50, 54, 55, 70, 71, 73, 75, 76, 77, 82, 83, 96, 273